

**European Values:  
Reflections on the Foundations of Christian Democracy**

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**For Erhard Busek**

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## Introduction

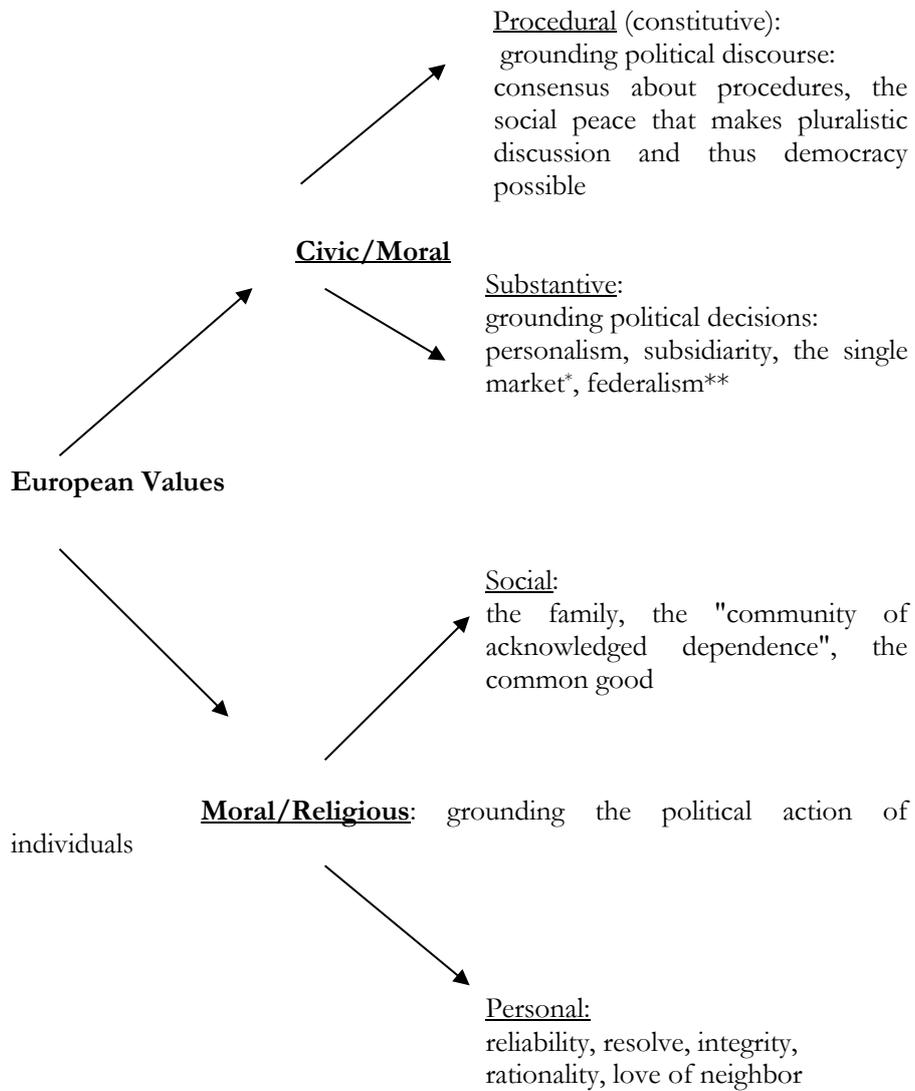
The financial crisis that began in 2008, whose full consequences for Europe and the world are still not apparent, appears to have dealt a blow to European integration by awakening slumbering discontent with what Europe has made of itself and thus skepticism with respect to what Europe can become. At one extreme, prophets of doom foresee the collapse of the Euro with a subsequent disintegration of the European community. At the very least, a two-speed Europe, or something like it, seems to be coming into existence. Moreover, economic crisis is increasingly accompanied by social crisis, which ultimately means political crisis. The exact nature of things is far from clear as this is being written. While such doomsday prophecies are to be taken with a grain of salt, they should not be entirely ignored either. There is every reason to be confident that Europe is capable of rising to the situation that the crisis presents. One thing that we should not forget is that crisis, frightening as it often is, also presents an opportunity for growth precisely because it forces us to reconsider what we expect of the European Union and therefore our most basic assumptions about it. There is much to be said for the thesis that the present crisis, or series of crises, is rooted precisely in neglect of those assumptions and the political values that incorporate them. Thus one aspect of coping with growing centripetal tendencies that have been released or accelerated by the crisis is to go back to the roots, to re-examine the thoughts of Europe's founding fathers in order to re-examine what drew people into the European project in the first place and especially to remind ourselves of those aspects of the original project that have not been wholly realized: the single market and the "ever closer union" it implies. That means reflecting upon the ideas and values that inspired Europe's founding fathers. Among those founding fathers none is more important than Robert Schuman. Indeed, May 9th 1950, the date of the Schuman Declaration, has the best claim to be the birth date of Europe. So it is not for nothing that the European parliament proclaimed him the Father of Europe in 1968. However, Robert Schuman's political vision was in turn rooted in Jacques Maritain's bold Christian humanism. His political ideas and the philosophy of politics they are embedded in as well as the values that underlie them are every bit as exciting and challenging today, in a situation in which the unity of Europe is subjected to enormous political, economic and cultural stresses, as they were when they were written down. Among other things they contain the key to understanding how we should be coping with the so-called "democracy deficit". In the two years since this study was conceived the problem seems, if anything, to have grown worse: Consider only the following remark:

European integration has now existed for the better part of a century. Post-Maastricht Europe is entering its third decade. It is wrong to say that the EU has a democratic deficit, as if it were striving and failing to democratize. What it has is an anti-democratic tradition. For those who think like Mr. Sarrazin or Mr. Tsipras, the burden of proof ought to be on Europe's defenders to show that the EU is even

democratizable (“You Wanted Brave, Mr. Draghi? Well Meet Mr. Sarrazin,” *Financial Times*, May 26/May 27, 2012, 11).

Coming from the *Financial Times*' editorialist Christopher Caldwell, this is not an allegation that can easily be ignored. Moreover, in the same week *The Economist* described the European Parliament as “hopelessly remote”. So it seems more imperative than even that Europeans refresh themselves with respect to the intellectual or philosophical origins of the European Union. Moreover, the very fact that we have become unaccustomed to speak about philosophy in connection with Europe is, in the light of the origins of the idea of Europe, an indication that it is time to do so. So the first part of this study will survey Robert Schuman's vision of the European project and its roots in the political thought of Jacques Maritain; whereas the second part will sketch the challenges which that cardinal constellation of political values relating to democracy, pluralism and the common good present for us today. It makes no claim to be comprehensive; there are other founding fathers and other aspects to the Schuman-Maritain program. The aim is to illuminate the question of what can be done about the ‘democracy deficit’ and ultimately to create a genuine European identity. A final word is necessary about the notion of ‘political values’ as the term is used here. Our main concern is less with the political values in the sense of the substantive values that inspire Christian Democrats when they formulate policies than with the procedural values that constitute the framework for centrist policy making in general, i.e., which insure the possibility of arguing rationally about the traditional foci of Christian Democratic policy, personalism, subsidiarity, the single market and federalism (Martens, 2008, 38) in the forum of European Union politics (See Fig. 1).

Figure 1



\* Not a value strictly speaking

\*\* Increasingly questioned

## **I The Founding Fathers: Robert Schuman and Jacques Maritain**

### **Robert Schuman's Vision of a Peaceful European Revolution**

Robert Schuman was a practical politician but he was also a visionary. He had an acute sense that coping with the problems of a continent that had torn itself apart in the first half of the 20th century required moral renewal as well as material prosperity and security, a new philosophy of public life as well as a new economic policy, if it were really to thrive. The idea that the crisis situation of post-World War II presented Europe with an opportunity for growth was an essential element in his vision. That vision was the well-spring of the European Union but, like all successful plans, its foundations tend to become lost or at least obscured in the very complexities of its own realization. The more we accomplish, the less obvious the foundations of our enterprise. It is a fundamental sociological truth that the more complex organizations become, the more deeply the presuppositions upon which they rest, i.e., the very assumptions that enable them to function, become embedded in their very fabric – and the more deeply they are embedded the less visible, and therefore more prone to being overlooked, they are (Fleck, 1979). Briefly, in the heat of crisis the short term demand for solutions to problems of a huge order of magnitude of the sort that the EU has been facing since (at least) 2008 tempts us to overlook the tried and true presuppositions of our own achievements, which have a way of being so self-evident that nobody thinks about them until crisis forces us to do so, i.e., at a point when we are in fact least able to think at the level of principles. So the very successes we have had in creating the vast complex that today's Europe has become tend to obscure the ideas and hopes that formed its beginnings. For that reason, Europeans today do well to remind themselves of the ideas that guided Robert Schuman's efforts to heal the wounds of a society that had all but self-destructed in the course of the two world wars. To re-examine the roots of his thinking is at the same time to re-discover a central source of inspiration for European Christian Democracy at a time when the European Union can profit greatly from re-considering the original well springs of its strength.

As a practical politician, Robert Schumann was not inclined to compose tomes of political philosophy but he did collect a short but poignant potpourri of texts from his speeches (as he suggests himself in his foreword, Schuman, 2000, p. 21) containing his fundamental thoughts about the future of Europe shortly before his death in 1963 under the title *Pour L'Europe (For Europe)*. Like the Schuman Declaration of 1950 the book reverberates with excitement and enthusiasm for European unity. In the same year a German translation with a preface by Konrad Adenauer was published and the book went on into many editions in many languages. It was reprinted in 2000 with an enthusiastic preface by Jacques Delors, who wrote of its "great relevance" (p. 9), again in 2005 and most recently in 2010. The very chapter headings of the book present us with a clear overview of its contents:

The division of Europe has become an absurd anachronism

Apart from being a military alliance or an economic entity Europe should be a cultural community in the highest sense of the term  
Europe transforms democracy into action in the Christian sense  
Without Germany just as without France, it would be impossible to construct Europe  
England will only accept integration in Europe under the constraint of events  
Economic integration is inconceivable in the long run without political integration  
The origin, goal and structuring of the European Coal and Steel Community  
Our duty to serve humanity is an obligation equal to the one that dictates fidelity to one's nation

With a certain touch of irony Schuman termed his program “revolutionary” in its pursuit of peace on the basis of close economic co-operation between the victors and the vanquished. It remains so in its demand for what we might call today a political “paradigm shift” (Kuhn, 1962, p. see below) with its combination of economics and culture, politics and religion, realism and idealism. Although the economic basis it envisages has long been a reality (despite the fact that the single market has not yet been achieved), the political integration it requires on his view is far from being a reality. Indeed, “ever closer union” seems to be becoming increasingly ephemeral in the face of a financial crisis that has brought a recrudescence of nationalism along with it; whereas the common cultural component, which is in his eyes an essential component in the Christian dimension of the project, has tended to shift into the background. The Europe he wanted to build rests firmly on Christian values that are decidedly first and foremost political values: a European common good should gradually come into existence on the basis of a common economic project rooted in a desire for security but aimed at a new level of common European flourishing. All in all, in *Pour L'Europe* Robert Schuman presents us with a powerful vision of a united, vital Europe that contains as many challenges fifty years later as it did when it was written. Europe's achievements in the last sixty years clearly attest to Robert Schuman's wisdom; what has not been achieved, especially with respect to the question of a European identity for its citizens, remains a major challenge. Our task here is to provide a reminder of what is involved in rising to that challenge today.

Without going into details Europe's about past failures or overstressing her past follies he presents an alternative to the draconian, revanchiste conception of the peace that the victors in World War I imposed on the vanquished in the treaties that were drawn up at Versailles, St. Germain and Trianon after the war. The aftermath of the devastation that was World War II has been a caesura in European history, a vacuum, that should be filled by introducing a radically new understanding of political order into Europe. Its basis is a concept of democracy firmly rooted in Christian fraternal love. What is needed is a sustainable (“durable” – a word that was as central to his

vocabulary then as it is to ours today) agreement that would insure peace and lead to prosperity in the form of a new cosmopolitan political culture in Europe. Mutual understanding should arise from the necessity of working together literally and figuratively to achieve material well-being in the context of a common project represented by the European Coal and Steel Community. The aims of the project involved de-nationalizing and therefore de-militarizing the production of steel in Europe under the aegis of a common European High Authority. That Authority should constitute a major step on the road to durable peace in Europe by providing the material basis for conciliating traditional enemies, France and Germany, and enabling them to grow closer together politically and culturally. Robert Schuman's vision of European unity was explicitly rooted French universalism, an American view of the nature of government and a peculiar Catholic version of Christian humanism. By any standards it remains a noble, beautiful vision that cries out for realization despite enormous obstacles that were assuredly no less well known to Robert Schuman then than they are to us today. To a great extent that vision of borders transformed from protective but nevertheless confining barriers into arteries of communication has been realized in the economic order and partially on the basis of student exchanges etc. in the cultural sphere. However, the vision of a cultural community with a common political life down to the grass roots still eludes us fifty years later, above all, the sense that participation in the European project is strikingly missing at the local level. The current crises thus constitutes an index both of how desirable such unity is and how difficult it is to achieve.

It may come as a surprise to many Europeans today, especially younger ones who tend to think of the United States as 'imperial America' of the last 20 years infected by the very spirit of egoism, nationalism, protectionism and cultural isolation that Robert Schuman deplored, that the vision of democracy which inspired him was decidedly American. Government "of the people, by the people and for the people" in the famous words of Lincoln's famous Gettysburg Address which he was fond of citing is precisely what he fervently desired to see replicated in Europe. However the surprises for today's reader of *Pour L'Europe* only begin there.

As we have seen, Robert Schuman insisted adamantly that economic unity alone would never suffice to produce a genuinely unified Europe: a united Europe needs to be a cultural unity based upon a common political will. He was very much aware that a united Europe required political institutions with the power of self-determination. To be sure, he did not favor turning Europe into a mega state but merely insisted upon the fact that economic integration alone could not unify Europe – something that the current financial crisis seems to be reminding us of with a vengeance. He spoke of the need for a super-national authority with the character of a federation but did not specify its character – here again, the model of the United States of America was foremost in his mind. He had confidence in the ability of Europe's leaders to find ways and means or ever closer union that did not disrupt national culture any more than regional culture does, if they

really want to create it. Thus the idea of subsidiarity is present in Robert Schuman's writings even if the word is not mentioned in *Pour L'Europe*. Common economic policy requires super-national authority and such common power of self-determination must be based upon a constitution, which brings a federation into existence. In his foresight Robert Schuman clearly warned that this federation should learn from the errors of national democracies and avoid bureaucratic and technocratic tendencies. He seems to have a clairvoyant sense of the threats to transparency and accountability that lurk in any large-scale political enterprise. Two aspects of his program remain particularly noteworthy for us as we contemplate "ever closer union" in Europe with all of the conundrums surrounding it in the second decade of the third millennium: his view of democracy and his view of its Christian basis. Here too we find more surprises than the uninitiated reader might suspect.

The key to federation on Schuman's view is majority rule. His point of departure is the idea that unanimity is something very rare in human affairs (Schuman, 2000, p. 51). This is an especially important point and it deserves special discussion here. Looking at what he terms the "paralysis" (Schuman, 2000, p. 144) of the United Nations Security Council already 50 years ago; Robert Schuman was radical enough to insist that the right to veto a majority decision is nothing less than dictatorial. Clearly, the veto right of the permanent members of the Security Council has been a problematic factor in promoting peace to the point that a prominent historian of that organization goes so far as to term the council a "conundrum" (Kennedy, 2007, pp. 52-76). Only after the disasters in Rwanda in 1994 and Srebrenica in 1995 has the UN become aware, not only that there is much room for improvement in its approach to international crises, but that "it has often shared responsibility for allowing political violence to happen" (Robinson, 2010, p. 18). There is little doubt that the right of veto of all of the permanent members of the council is at the root of the problem as Schuman suggested. It is no less problematic in Europe. Only with the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty has the EU enshrined the principle of majority rule but that only after 2014 and then not in all cases. That should serve to remind us that we still have a way to go to catch up with Robert Schuman's insight with respect to the principle of majority rule. The same holds true of his concept of democracy.

He views democracy as a continually evolving phenomenon as a "continuous creation" (Schuman, 2000, p. 65), echoing Thomistic theology, that involves gradual growth on the basis of common enterprise and free discussion. To put the matter in terms that Robert Schuman does not explicitly employ but doubtless would endorse, what people have in common unites them and what unites them makes ever closer union possible. Thus economic co-operation creates a common work that establishes a dynamics of common interest, which in turn, ultimately issues in an awareness of common goals and therefore an enthusiasm for the common good that underlies such common activity. Thus his vision incorporates a subtle interplay of realism and idealism.

Robert Schuman was surprisingly adamant in defending the view that the activities of the developing union must be “controlled” by public opinion (p. 109) exercised with responsibility. If economic integration implies political integration, as he believed that it did, political action at the European level requires public scrutiny. So there is every reason to believe that Robert Schuman would be in the front row of those who protest the European Union’s lack of transparency and accountability today. However, it was part and parcel of Robert Schuman’s conviction that democracy should be continually creating itself in new and unexpected ways that he did not spell out how that should control should be exercised. Such a problem will recur in all sorts of form and thus has to be handled in the context(s) that it arises on the basis of the specific circumstances that the context(s) represent. Given his fears about the dangers that bureaucratization and technocracy present, there is no reason to think that he would be in the least surprised by citizens’ complaints today that there is a “democracy deficit” in European Union. Indeed, one of the reasons for undertaking the project of re-exploring the foundations of his thinking now is to seek hints about how we might cope with problems of transparency and accountability in the European Union in today’s ever more globalized world (see section II below).

To be sure, Robert Schuman considered the establishment of the European Community of Steel and Coal to be the material basis of a new European politics but it was no less a new foundation for world politics rooted the spirit of generosity and co-operation as its moral basis. Just as a united Europe demands generosity and the spirit of co-operation as well as economic prosperity, if its citizens are to thrive, so does the whole world. However, the very heading of the chapter on England in *Pour L’Europe*, "England will only accept integration in Europe under the constraint of events," indicates that he had no illusions about the centripetal tendencies in Europe, which also had – and still have -- to be faced squarely. Nevertheless, his vision of Europe was what we would now term a globalized one, so intimate did he perceive the potential links between the national states within Europe – but also their link to the rest of the world. His reasoning is very simple here: it is in everyone’s interest to establish peace in the world; its prerequisites are prosperity and good will. Neither the one nor the other arises spontaneously; we have to strive to realize them but that effort will be generously rewarded if it is successful. Moreover, as a Frenchman looking towards Africa in the early 1960s he could only see the disastrous results of short-sighted colonialization and of superficial democratization: These, too, were part of the European heritage, a part that demanded redress. It is not for nothing that one of the central tasks of the new economic union already proposed in his dramatic declaration of the 9th of May, 1950 should be the development of the African continent (Schuman, 1950). A truly European politics on the view of Robert Schuman necessarily looks beyond the continent itself to the world that Europe has shaped in the modern era and is capable of re-shaping now— yet another aspect of the surprising relevance and refreshing character of his ideas today.

However, we have scarcely touched upon the Christian center of his vision. The key to Robert Schuman's conception of politics is to understand its moral basis: the rejection of egoism in all its forms and its focus on the common good. Sound politics requires nothing less than an act of faith in the common sense ("bon sens") of peoples, who are convinced that their well-being rests upon their solidarity and co-operation with one another. Stated directly as an ideal, his ideal seems simply naïve and unrealistic in a world where everyday politics is shot-through with cynicism but Robert Schuman nevertheless found precisely this attitude incorporated in Abraham Lincoln's notion of "government of the people, by the people and for the people". He was firmly convinced that such a view of government was something essentially Christian in spirit, despite its secular form in, say, the USA, whose Bill of Rights, like the French Declaration of the Rights of Man, represent a secularization of basic Christian values. He found the fullest expression of the Christian basis of democracy in Jesus' injunction to brotherly love, which he clearly recognized had its counterparts in other traditions both religious and secular. The difference was that in the other traditions democracy was not based on the equality of all human beings irrespective of race, color, class or profession; whereas for Christians fraternal love implies absolute respect for the dignity of the human person as a free being endowed with rights in the temporal order – an idea that took long to develop, whose full implications are still being worked out, but one that has been at the core of Christianity from the start. One need only look at the difference between ancient and modern democracy to the point. Both in its historical development and its conceptual development modern democracy is essentially Christian in its origins (pp. 52-53) – even if, say, Americans have forgotten the religious nature of their Puritan heritage.

Two things are important to point out here about Robert Schuman's view of Christian politics: it is not a matter of creating a Christian social order, i.e., subordinating civil society to Christian moral values, but a matter of bringing a pluralistic society inspired by Christian political values, i.e., based upon the equality of all human beings, into existence. Paradoxically, the United States is his example of such a society precisely because the separation of church and state there is entirely compatible with recognition of a great religious tradition – something that is a far cry from mere tolerance; it is therefore possible for religion to thrive in a democratic Europe, whose very democracy in turn will find its wellsprings in religion. Indeed, Schuman sees the task of the responsible Christian Democratic politician as that of reconciling the demands of the temporal and the spiritual order in a delicate synthesis involving reconciling the validity of eternal moral principles to the demands of changing social circumstances and the specific character of the situations they present. Here he emphasizes that a Christian revolution is not the instant result of violence but of patient progressive transformation absolutely requiring qualities that we scarcely dare to mention at all today, let alone in connection with politics: fraternal charity, self-sacrifice and humility, values that he incorporated in his person. Thus his program entails a moral

revolution in public life, i.e., the rejection of egoism either in the form secular laissez-faire liberalism or as chauvinism, rooted in the Gospel and realized in a slow painful struggle in European society.

In concluding this discussion of Robert Schuman's vision of Europe it is important to point out that his writings, although addressed to all of Europe, and indeed the world, are especially directed to his French countrymen. This is entirely logical; for it is they who are being asked to be generous to a defeated enemy; it is they who are being asked to forego reparations and in their place work for a common future. Thus he is keen to emphasize the roots of his proposals in "French universalism" and that appeal is certainly justified. However, on his own view that most laudable cosmopolitanism was doubtless a secularized form of Christian humanism. In their external political manifestation as commitment to democratic values the two were the same. Where they differed was with respect to the foundations of civic humanism. Robert Schuman was convinced that the generosity it required could only really be rooted in fraternal love. Science and reason (philosophy) might provide theoretical justifications for it but only the command to "love thy neighbor as thyself" really justifies putting it into action in the heat of political discussion. Such a view of true humanism was based upon his political experience and upon the philosophy of Jacques Maritain, as Schuman clearly emphasized. Indeed, he was so deeply influenced by Maritain's writings on political philosophy that one commentator remarked that upon reading Chapter Three of *Pour L'Europe* the first time he found so much Maritain that he thought that Robert Schuman had simply forgotten to put in all the necessary quotation marks (René Mougel, 2006, p. 74). It is to Jacques Maritain that we must turn to find a systematic justification of the ideas underlying Robert Schuman's conception of Christian Democracy as well as the full intellectual and philosophical context from which they emerged, which merits the term "paradigm shift" both for its departure from conventional Christian thinking about the secular order and for its emphasis upon the moral, indeed, spiritual basis of democracy.

### **Jacques Maritain's Concept of Heroic Christian Politics:**

The influence of ideas in party politics is notoriously hard to demonstrate, but a strong case can be made the Christian Democratic parties' turn toward moderation and their eventual embrace of modern party politics is related to the theological and philosophical notions about the compatibility of Catholicism and Democracy. While there was no single cause of accommodation, ideas were indispensable to the process. Arguably the most influential figure in generating the intellectual grounds for Christian Democracy's emergence in party politics was the French philosopher Jacques Maritain.

Jan-Werner Müller, Making Muslim Democracies, *The Boston Review* (2010)

It is precisely these grounds that we must examine if we are to understand the philosophical and historical underpinnings of the view of politics that Robert Schuman took over from the philosopher Jacques Maritain. If Maritain is at all known today outside a small circle of Neo-Thomistic philosophers, it is for his urbane and sensitive contributions to philosophical aesthetics and perhaps for his philosophy of education. In Thomistic circles he is primarily known for his metaphysical and epistemological writings and certainly not for his political philosophy. Indeed, in a blog commenting upon Jan-Werner Müller's article in the *Boston Review* a distinguished American cultural historian laments that, although he got his fill of the thought of Jacques Maritain as an undergraduate at an American Jesuit university in the late 1940s, he never heard a word about the Maritain that Müller writes about (Hazard, 2010). There is no question that this is still so. The courageous political philosopher, who through Robert Schuman, Charles de Gaulle (in a very different way, Clément and Husson, 2006, p. 91) and others (including the Italian translator of his main political work from the 30s, Giovanni Battista Montini, later Pope Paul VI), so profoundly influenced a sea change in Catholic attitudes to politics and the development of what would become the European Union remains worthy of being re-discovered. His notion of politics was part of what was then a radically new way of conceiving the relationship between the sacred and the secular that Maritain developed building upon the Catholic opening to the modern world that began in the late 1870s with Pope Leo XIII's "revolutionary" recognition (in the very title of his monumental social encyclical *Rerum Novarum*) of the importance of the distinction between the temporal and the spiritual in Catholic social policy (Gilson, 1954, p. 3). It proceeded from profound reflection upon developments in Europe starting with World War I and continuing well into the Cold War. The conception of Christian Democracy that he developed was in fact rooted in nothing less than a Christian-inspired philosophical critique of what was involved in becoming modern that remains timely in at least two respects. First, his critique of

modernity, inaccurately described as anti-modernism when he wrote, can be positively compared with that of today's post-modernists for its lack of pathos and confusion. Second, his defense of the idea of politics as a rational activity of human persons in the pursuit of collective autonomy provides a welcome alternative to that of 'political scientists' who see the subject exclusively as a power game. His theological concept of Christianity was radically incarnationalist (as opposed to eschatological): he considered that it is the duty of Christians to sanctify the secular, which means meeting secular society on its own terms and transforming it from within, rather than by legislating to it or merely lamenting its 'godlessness'. His philosophy sought rational, and therefore secular, solutions to problems in society based upon moral values, which can be discovered by reason alone but whose most adequate ultimate justification was to be found in Christian belief. So his Christian political philosophy is distinguished as much by the questions it poses as the substance of answers produced to them; for those answers must be proposed in rational, i.e., secular terms. Indeed, strict separation of the secular sphere of politics and the sacred sphere of religion is the cardinal point in all of his political and social thought. It is anything but accidental that his major work on political thought *Humanisme intégral* contains a sensitive discussion the significance of atheism in modern European society that anticipates Henri de Lubac's classic account of the "drama of atheistic humanism" (de Lubac, 1944) in the view that there are serious lessons for Christian philosophers in the errors of atheists.

It is clear even from a superficial reading of *Pour L'Europe* that the work which Schuman principally drew upon in writing it was Maritain's *Christianisme et Démocratie (Christianity and Democracy)* of 1943. The view of Christian politics Maritain presents in *Christianisme et Démocratie* is itself a summary of the central points a series of philosophical writings (Maritain, 1933, 1940, 1941, 1943, 1943a)<sup>1</sup>, including the previously mentioned *Humanisme intégral* of 1936, about Catholicism, politics and the fate of Europe beginning in the late 1920s. This series includes a group of writings reacting to the fate of France and Europe in World War II beginning less than two weeks after the German invasion of Poland in 1939 that provide us with the concrete historical, political, intellectual and religious context from which Maritain's concept of democracy with Christian foundations was conceived. Spelling out the central tenets of Maritain's then radical view of how Christianity can inspire genuine democratic politics thus involves reference to those works as well as his writings up to the time when Schuman issued his celebrated declaration in 1950. A brief overview of these writings will serve to complete

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<sup>1</sup> It is no simple task to reconstruct the chronology of Maritain's ideas in the 30s and 40s. Everything he wrote went through more than one printing; he wrote in both French and English but did not necessarily publish in the language in which he wrote; his writings are repetitious to the point of containing identical passages; some were not published at the time of writing but only later, sometimes considerably so etc. Fortunately an exact chronology is not required for our purposes.

our picture of the driving ideas behind Robert Schuman's concept of politics and thus as a point of departure for our re-evaluation of these reflections. Thus our story is about the way that Maritain developed a philosophical view of politics inspired by the Gospels as a reaction to central developments in European history in the first half of the 20th century and, indeed, to the very program of modernity itself.

Jacques Maritain and Robert Schuman only met each other a couple of times. They were never close friends. However, as 'men of the frontier', Schuman as a French politician, who was a native speaker of German with family origins in Luxemburg and had grown to maturity in Lorraine, literally (Schuman, 2000, p, 19) and Maritain figuratively as the scion of a well-known liberal family who converted to Catholicism and married a Russian Jew bringing all of these influences into his way of conceiving the renewal of Catholic political thought, they shared a common understanding of what it is to strive to create a politics of the center across national, cultural, intellectual and religious borders (Flocat, 1999). Each of them had a profound personal sense of what had gone wrong in inter-war Europe as well as how a democratic politics with a Christian inspiration could renew European political culture in the aftermath of totalitarianism. Theirs was a dramatic, monumental vision of what Europe might become that they pursued with boundless passion and enormous modesty: it is difficult to overestimate the force of their personalities in propagating and legitimating the vision that they propagated. Both were capable of incorporating profound personal experience of the trials and tribulations of Frenchmen into their professional lives in ways that have benefited Europe immensely. It is possible to sum up the pillars of their common view of the Christian inspiration for genuinely democratic politics as 1) personalism, 2) communitarianism and 3) pluralism precisely as they are 4) inspired by Christian teaching (Mougel, 2006, p 82-84). Thus establishing the absurdity or inadequacy of any form of humanism that was neither religious nor Christian was a central part of his philosophical project. It is most fully developed in his *Humanisme intégral (True Humanism)* of 1936, which was originally a set of lectures in Spain two years earlier. What, then, did Maritain understand under personalism, communitarianism, pluralism and Christian inspiration?

Under personalism Maritain understands a spiritual concept of what it is to be a human being that transcends mere material, i.e., numerical individuality. A person is a unity of intellect, will and feelings that, as such, is capable of acting autonomously. A person, as opposed to an individual, is not an interchangeable member of a class of objects but a unique self-creating subject with a claim to be recognized as such. Recognizing the liberty of another person, involves limiting myself voluntarily because it is good for both of us. What holds true for the individual, holds equally for society and ultimately the state. If a person is to fulfill his or her personal goals freely that autonomy must be recognized in public life. Thus Maritain's most basic principle in the political order is the liberty of the person. Restricting the autonomy of a person is to de-personalize that person and ultimately to de-

personalize oneself, be it individually or collectively, in an act of egocentric self-assertion. Personality is therefore a relational concept that comes into being in the act of recognizing autonomy of others as the limit of self assertion. Thus personality is at once the central notion in any humanistic ethics and in any humanistic conception of politics.

However, there is a positive as well as a negative side of the truth that humans as persons are essentially relational beings. Being recognized as an autonomous being does not suffice; for persons only thrive in intercourse with one another. Their well being only comes into existence in the fullest sense on co-operative undertakings from which everyone involved shares, i.e., in communal life, what some philosophers following Aristotle term “civic friendship”. Human beings are the kinds of creatures that need companionship if they are to thrive; sociability is essential to human nature. The common good that arises from common activities is greater than the mere sum of its parts. Thus originates the idea of the Common Good out of the natural movement of human beings towards one another. Community, then, is the second pillar upon which Maritain’s conception of democracy rests. It is interesting and important that Maritain’s emphasizes the good of community more than he does the more abstract idea of the common good.

Yet, not all of us have the same beliefs, desires, goals etc. Thus the recognition of the other and the good of the community that arises out of our fraternal relationship with one another requires us to accept the other’s right to be different. Thus a personalist, communitarian society is pluralistic – in religious terms ecumenical -- to the core. Maritain conspicuously displayed such pluralism both personally and philosophically in his personal relationships with people like Nicolai Berdyaev and Saul Alinsky as well as in his intellectual efforts to come to grips with socialism and atheism from a Christian point of view. Both Maritain and Schuman were convinced that the uncompromising Christian commandment to love our neighbor as ourself was the most adequate way of grounding personalism, community and pluralism in Europe. That Christian love of neighbour implied a direct relationship between Christianity and democracy was the radical innovation in Maritain’s political philosophy which would transform European politics after World War II. Paraphrasing G.K. Chesterton, whom he deeply admired, Maritain could well have asserted that it was not that a Christian version of democracy had been tried and failed but simply that it had not been tried.

From the perspective European politics in the second decade of the twenty first century all of this sounds rather innocent, even innocuous but it certainly was not at the time that Maritain was writing, i.e., in the 30s and 40s. Then there was a clear polar opposite conception of the political order to be found in racist Germany and the communist Soviet Union. Maritain was among the first political thinkers to equate communism and fascism by bringing both together under the rubric totalitarianism. The Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact of August 23, 1939 was proof positive in his eyes that, all ideological claims to the contrary, the principle characteristic of German Nazism and that of Soviet Communism was in fact identical: complete

rejection of human liberty. There was absolutely nothing to choose between here (Maritain, 1940, p. 4ff.) as politically engaged intellectuals in the 1930s were inclined to think. Moreover, they left no room of intermediate forms of association between the individual and the state, i.e. civil society. Totalitarian regimes effectively abolished society, creating in the place of society an aggregate of atomized individuals (in a phrase sociologists sometimes use) over against an all-powerful state. The state, and the state alone, determined what an adequate opinion, mode of behavior or form of association was. There was no room for dissent whatsoever.

If Nazi Germany and Soviet Communism were absurdly inhuman, secular liberalism and authoritarian clericalism were clearly inadequately human. The former abandoned the spirit of community to crude egoism in the form of rugged individualism with its cut throat competition; whereas the latter confused the spiritual and the temporal orders to the detriment of both. Thus the series of arguments Maritain produced in the 30s and 40s are in aid of developing the concept of a Christian inspired democratic politics involved his taking a position against a fourfold threat that would undermine both Christianity and democracy. In his discussion of the conceptual foundations of totalitarianism Maritain distinguishes between the forms of atheism that deny the existence of God only to worship idols in place of God and others which declare that God really exists but only as a protector of a certain race or state (Maritain, 1936, p. 300). The former, Communism and secular liberalism, deny; whereas the latter, fascism and clerical authoritarianism, instrumentalize God for political purposes. Thus Maritain's battle to establish what we would today term Christian Democracy is one which he has to fight on four fronts, one of which relates directly to Church involvement in politics (see fig. 2). This needs to be emphasised because it is also all too easy to overlook the fact that his critique of the residual concept of Christian politics that the early 20<sup>th</sup> century inherited from the Treaty of Westphalia is an essential element in his political program. As a canny Thomist his critique of all four proceeds from the premise that there is implicit in each of them a certain insight into a basic human need or aspiration, be it social cohesion, justice, individual enterprise or moral authority that is made into an object of idolatrous worship in fascism, Communism, bourgeois liberalism and political clericalism. Lack of a true perspective, the sense of the Divine as transcendent and of the relative autonomy of the political sphere as an arena for the exercise of political liberty, thus produces not one but a series of perversions within modern politics. The historical part of his argument lays bare a scenario in terms of which these developments turn out to be part and parcel of becoming modern.

Basically, Maritain sees true humanism, both in its ancient Greek and medieval Christian forms as conceiving human nature as being related to what is divine: religion in general, because it recognizes the finitude of human beings, over against the divine; Christianity, because its central tenet commands an unqualified love of neighbour in practice. Humanism as such recognizes the fundamental and inalienable autonomy of human beings. It is

an ethical view that is entirely reasonable, which can be found in, say, classical Greek or, anticipating Amartya Sen (Sen, 2009, p. 329-332) Hindu societies. However, true humanism (*humanisme intégral*) is distinguished by the adequacy of its metaphysical foundation most directly expressed in the Christian injunction to love your neighbor as yourself. Becoming modern meant precisely severing this traditional relation between the human and the divine completely with cataclysmic results for our understanding of politics. That caesura was accomplished in politics by Machiavelli on the basis of a radical divorce between ethics and politics, which in fact transformed egoism into a virtue (Maritain, 1955 [originally 1941], 283-318); in philosophy by Descartes, whose aim was to replace philosophy by science and thus produce an equally sharp antithesis between reason and faith and finally in society by Rousseau, who turned his back on living human beings in order to deify the collective Idea of Man. In the 20th century the tragic implications of these developments have finally become clear: our individualistic, ego-centric, rationalistic picture of human nature no longer allows us to consider human beings as autonomous persons, who by their nature, nevertheless, relate to other persons, including God. De-personalizing human beings has transformed modern history into a series of tragedies culminating in the rise of totalitarianism, the ultimate anti-Christian form of politics.

Even Christianity itself has not been able to escape a tragic fate in its entanglements with fascism in the 20th century. The pluralism that Maritain insisted was part and parcel of any Christian politics implied that all beliefs, including Catholic ones, had to be considered of equal significance in the public sphere. This was a completely new idea. In order to argue for it Maritain had to further develop Pope Leo XIII's strict distinction between the temporal and the spiritual order/authority by drawing its full anti-totalitarian implications. He accomplishes this by arguing from the New Testament distinction between the things that are Caesar's and the things that are God's (Maritain, 1927), a theme that he returns to over and over in all his political writings. There can be no question that the spiritual order, the things that are God's, have primacy over the things that are Caesar's: the final end of man is union with Divine Love. However, Maritain insists that there is a profane significance to this message, namely, that love of God begins with love of neighbour, which means accepting our fellows as they are, i.e., as human persons endowed with liberty by God. Pluralism has to be the primary political value in any state inspired by Christian principles today. In the Middle Ages historical circumstances were such that the homogeneity of society permitted the existence of a Christian society; however, the catastrophe that was modernization and secularization has left us with a temporal order that could only be "Christianized" in an unchristian way, i.e., by denying human beings their liberty. Today a Christian politics must be a democratic, pluralistic politics inspired by the Gospels. This is the challenge of what Maritain explicitly terms "New Christianity". The latter should be an inspiration that helps us to cope with our "revolutionary" times. Thus Maritain's philosophy of culture (Maritain, 1936, pp. 221-224) incorporates a quasi-Hegelian

(Maritain, 1933, p. 49) historicist moment that is foreign to medieval Thomistic Aristotelianism but nevertheless compliments and extends it. The spiritual message of Christianity is eternal and unchanging; its temporal significance is contingent and changes as culture and society develop. Moreover, faith is opposed to scepticism with regard to things divine; whereas the contingent nature of historical development always leaves room for a Christian form of scepticism: The Christian politician is critical because (s)he is always aware of human imperfection and therefore basically self-critical.

At the very beginning of *Christianisme et Démocratie* Maritain asserts that he finds himself in the midst of revolutionary developments that can be positively exploited for peace and political renewal in Europe. As early as the 12th of September 1939 as Poland was crumbling before Nazis and Soviet hordes with the Allies hopelessly looking on, he had expressed his confidence that “Europe will not loose” as the title of one of his newspaper articles runs (Maritain, 1940, pp. 1-14 — it is echoed in perhaps the most dramatic statement by Charles de Gaulle during the war, “nothing has been lost”, which he broadcast from London on June 19, 1940 after the fall of France, Crémieux-Brilhac, 2010, p. 97).

From the very beginning Maritain saw World War II (as most historians do today) as the continuation of a cataclysm that had begun in 1914 as well as a European civil war (Maritain, 1941, p. 23) militarily and in 1918-1919 economically and politically, which destroyed great institutions “but may also create a new world” in the words of the greatest critic of Versailles (Keynes, 1919, p. 4). In the aftermath of the total devastation that was World War II as a consequence of those short sighted policies, it should now finally be possible to start fresh. The material and cultural devastation that World War II wrought was thus taken to have produced with it a political *tabula rasa* upon which a whole new political scenario for Europe could be written. That is what Maritain meant when he spoke of revolution in Europe.

Such a revolutionary situation demands revolutionary thinking, thinking on a monumental scale, which entails re-thinking the very basis of political action itself. But thinking is nothing without action. Thus Maritain challenged Frenchman and Europeans to rise to a new form of political heroism. Basically, the ideas that he advocated were as simple as they were profound and deeply rooted in the western Christian tradition. The problem was that they had become obscured in the course of modernization and secularization. Machiavelli, Descartes and Rousseau completely dismantled the Christian medieval synthesis of secular and sacred in a way that had made it irrecoverable. The violent passing of the Westphalian order (which was itself little less than a set of more or less grudging compromises, Evans,) in World War I had left Europe so traumatized as to loose sight of the fact that generosity rather than the spirit of revenge was to only way to create a sustainable post-war political order. Briefly the task that the victors so botched in 1919 was that of creating a political will to live together in peace and dignity, the only life worth living for Christians.

A word is necessary here on Jacques Maritain's view of France on the verge of World War II. It is in fact a devastating critique of both the parties of the left and the parties of the right to rise to the challenge of thinking in terms of the common good. The left took refuge in its relationship to Soviet communism, only to be totally disillusioned by the Hitler-Stalin Pact. It lived on vacuous phrases about class war and the like. The right took refuge in a no less unrealistic vision of a bourgeois France that in fact excluded a huge segment of the French populace. It was ready to go to war but only half-heartedly and then to preserve an illusory 'France' as it did in Vichy. Ideological navel-gazing paralyzed both the right and the left and crippled both when it came to decisive action for the really existing France. In bizarre, bankrupt collusion right and left polarized and paralyzed France creating a political demoralization that in fact made it impossible for the country to rise to the challenge of opposing Hitler – a line of thinking that closely paralleled de Gaulle's analysis of French military failure (de Saint Robert, 2010). The end of the 3rd republic was the complete incarnation of the tragedy of Machiavellianism. The cowardice and lack of generosity that both right and left displayed openly in French politics in the 1930 was proof positive that France – and Europe – desperately need a new form of heroism in public life – one that was genuinely based upon French universalism that would put an end to Machiavellianism. His "new" Christianity demanded precisely that, i.e., a superhuman effort to be generous to our political adversaries, a rational project that demanded the trans-rational strength of the sort that Christian belief provides.

Thus Maritain's "new Christian" approach to politics differs from modern power-centred received wisdom about politics in three crucial respects: first, in its Aristotelian-Thomistic conviction that normal human beings are capable of governing themselves reasonably; second, in the view that democratic politics rests upon moral values, especially the rejection of egoism in all its forms in public life, as well as institutional foundations, i.e., elections, parliaments, parties etc.; third, that the moral foundations of western democracy, i.e., belief in human dignity, responsible pursuit of the communal interests and patient tolerance with respect to dissent, the rights of minorities and the essential notion of the liberty of human persons as such upon which the former are based, are trans-rational; they may be justified abstractly on the basis of reason alone but in the concrete they require the sort belief in human beings of flesh and blood and their capacity to act together that mere ideas alone cannot inspire. Maritain was well aware that there was such a thing as the old Stoic conception of natural religion (Maritain, 1936, p. 136) and the modern pragmatist notion of a common liberal faith (cf. Cohen, 1946) but he nevertheless insisted upon the primacy of Christian faith. The Christian command to "love your neighbor as yourself" is not a merely a philosophical principle dictating how we should understand and criticize human behavior but a command to take up a concrete course of action in our lives, one that has a secular, political implications of the first order.

Yet, there seems to be a paradox at the center of Maritain's political thought. Societies that are not explicitly Christian nevertheless manage to be truly democratic; indeed, sometimes more easily than societies that are explicitly Christian. The question is then, how does Maritain reconcile his claim that democracy needs Christianity if it is to be genuine democracy with the existence of functioning secular forms of genuine democracy? Beyond that, there have been -- and still were at the time Maritain was writing (Maritain, 1936, p. 296) -- Catholic dictatorships in Spain and Portugal, not to speak of Italy or even Slovakia, that were ruthlessly anti-democratic. Catholic Christianity seemed to many people throughout the world for quite a long time after Maritain was writing to be in essence firmly committed to authoritarianism. Why should anyone consider that democracy was something essentially Christian? Does not the existence of secular democracies falsify his claim that democracy is essentially Christian? To answer this question Maritain the conceptual resources of his Aristotelian tradition to clarify an issue that typically modern thinking only obscured.

The epistemological counterpart to Machiavelli's power-centered conception of politics is Cartesian clarity and distinctness with respect to concepts. Becoming modern in has meant seeking Cartesian neat definitions as a preliminary to understanding the world. That has been a mixed blessing. True, it gave us modern physical science with all its triumphs but, Maritain insists, we have paid a huge price for that in everything bearing upon human action. The pursuit of a 'science' of society meant ignoring ancient and medieval insights into the nature of human practice that were the domain of Aristotelian practical philosophy, a domain where, as Aristotle himself warned, we easily can seek too much clarity at the expense of misunderstanding social phenomena and ultimately failing to act effectively. So Maritain's point of departure for understanding democracy is the re-introduction of the perspective of the philosophy of practice (Maritain, 1936, p.6), which completely rejects the idea that we can understand human activity and institutions on the basis of the sort sharp definitions that are the basis of strictly scientific knowledge. Ambiguity is part and parcel of human life and human institutions; we try to eliminate it at our peril. Indeed, persons of practical wisdom ["prudence" or *phronesis* in Aristotelian terms] as opposed to ideologues or opportunists are precisely those individuals who have insight into the genuine human demands that the very lack of clarity in political situations place upon us. Their particular form of insight into human behavior involves a concrete capacity to make tricky decisions about the crucial differences between situations sharply distinguishing between those in which the normal rule applies and those in which we do better to make an exception. Moreover, in stark contrast to post-Cartesian modern thinkers, who insist that there is one and only one clear and distinct definition of a given phenomenon such as knowledge, Maritain draws upon an Aristotelian philosophical insight that is also at the center of Thomistic thinking about man and society: the idea that the referents of terms like democracy are related to each other on the basis of similarities, rather than as members of a class sharing a set of identical

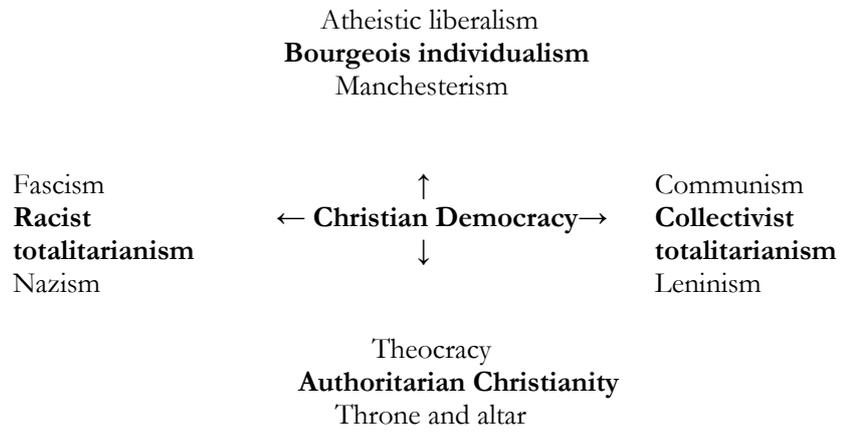
characteristics. The exact concepts of natural science allow us to reason regularly on the basis of an either/or polarity; whereas in matters of action both/and reasoning is more typical. This means that the unity of such a concept is an analogous unity and not a univocal one. Thus the question whether a country or an institution or a person is “democratic” or not is not a question to which we should expect a straight-forward “yes or no” answer. More interesting will be the question of how democratic an institution is. Among democracies there will be more and less democratic societies, institutions, actions etc. The same will hold true for applying the qualification “Christian” to democracy.

Maritain’s claim – indeed, his whole political philosophy -- is based upon the idea that, just as there is a temporal (secular, profane) as well as a spiritual dimension to Christianity, there is an indirectly religious dimension to politics. This reciprocal relationship is what lies behind the concept of Christian democracy. However, just as the various forms of democracy are democratic by virtue of analogies with classical democracies, England, Holland, the United States etc., there can be societies which are “Christian” on the basis of the analogies that their mode of political life has with an explicitly Christian-inspired democratic political order. This temporal dimension of the Christian message of brotherly love expresses itself as “civic friendship” in classical political theory (today we tend to speak more aridly of “reciprocity”). Christian societies that are democracies must cherish that ideal but other democracies will as well. Seen from Maritain’s Christian standpoint they are Christian by analogy. In fact, Maritain stands firmly in the mainstream of classical Christian thought here endorsing Tertulian’s principle, *anima naturaliter christiana* (Maritain, 1943, p. 21): whatever is genuinely reasonable to the human mind is by that very fact Christian because it is conducive to a human being’s spiritual well-being. Personal liberty, for example, is a secular good that is absolutely necessary to have a full spiritual life today. So it is easy for Maritain to see to see more “Christian” phenomena in the world than non-Christians would. The point is that this very traditional way of seeing the secular world allows him to make strong claims for the Christian nature of democracy that are entirely compatible with existence of thriving secular democracies. Indeed, at the very beginning of his major work on political philosophy he asserts that Ramanuja, Epictetus and Nietzsche agree with St. John of the Cross that the human spirit is more than merely human. So the ecumenical perspective, as we would today term it, which pervades Maritain’s thought, is present from the very start (Maritain, 1936, p. 10).

Jacques Maritain was a philosopher, not a politician. He had no political ambitions whatsoever and had to be cajoled by Charles de Gaulle (whose courage he admired but whose politics he distanced himself from) to accept the diplomatic post of ambassador to the Vatican in the immediate post-war years (largely for the sake of coping with the vacuum with respect to moral authority left by the collaboration of French bishops during the war, Barré, 2005, 500-501). So it should not be surprising that he had precious little to say about exactly how the pluralism that he so adamantly advocated should

be put into practice. That is a matter for people of practical insight in the sense mentioned above not for philosophers – although it is clear from his writings that what is involved is nothing less than heroic in the ancient Greek sense, of rising to the challenge of responding to a tragic situation. Politics is always potentially the scene of tragedy; every politician in a democracy, even the most successful, ultimately fails –if for no other reason than that times change and policies that were once progressive become problematic. Indeed, the more closely you read Maritain’s political writings of the 30s and the 40s the more one can perceive the scenario of Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* in the background (explicitly, Maritain, 1941, p. 38 but throughout the writings of the period especially, Maritain 1933): the irrational premises upon which politics rest clearly have produced destructive violence; and that violence in turn collective madness and self-destructive behavior. The revolutionary task of politics is precisely to turn that situation around by taming the Furies an establishing a new just political order on the basis of rationality. Maritain’s revolution, as Robert Schuman clearly perceived, is a revolution that edifies on the basis of reason. The Christian perspective is one that allows us to cope with the superhuman demands, such as, say, the demand to be generous to an ungenerous enemy, which true politics place upon us. However, that Christianity is decidedly an ecumenical Christianity; for Maritain insists at a crucial juncture in his argument that it is none other than Gandhi who has delivered both the means and the example of a new heroic political tactics for overcoming barbarism in an age of violence (Maritain, 1933, p. 196ff.) Those demands remain despite the enormous changes in Europe since Schuman’s time. How are we to understand them today from the midst of a half-finished European project with a democracy deficit? That is the theme of the second part of this study. In order to explore the meaning of the constellation of ideas from Schuman and Maritain already discussed we shall have to go beyond the borders of Europe and outside the inner circle of thinkers explicitly identifying themselves as Christian Democrats as is appropriate in an inquiry into the basis of centrist politics.

Figure 2



## Appendix

### **The United States of Europe? Reflections on Federalism, Christian Values and the Public Philosophy**

Allan Janik

There is scarcely a topic about which more nonsense is spoken in discussions of European politics and the future of the European Union than the idea of the “United States of Europe”. How frequently we hear the indignant cry, “God forbid, we certainly do not want a United States of Europe!” Less frequently we hear the ejaculation, “what we need is a United States of Europe!”. Least frequently we hear, “what we have a United States of Europe!” What all three views have in common is that they are expressions of commonplace sentiments positive or negative that are seldom linked to anything that might remotely count as precise knowledge of the development of the United States and its institutions. The laments usually follow upon disparaging remarks about some unfortunate bit of American policy or politics, be it foreign policy misadventures or episodes of domestic legislative gridlock, of which there have been all too many in the years since the European Union has come into being. The infrequent praise we hear is usually linked to American efficiency and business-like attitudes that get things done often in the face of huge obstacles. Yet, the question of what makes the United State “tick” politically, its institutions and the spirit that informs them when they function properly, is scarcely taken into consideration. This is a mistake; for there are indeed lesson for Europeans lurking in what they often take to be the morass of American democracy. Moreover, since mistrust or even outright fear of “Americanization” is an Old Saw among European conservatives, it requires more careful scrutiny here than the more infrequent mindless adulation that the United States is capable of evoking abroad. Both views are curiously “American” in their extreme character: America is almost always better than its detractors believe; worse than Americans (and their friends) claim when they get up on their chauvinistic high-horse.

Yet, two of the founding fathers of our Europe, Robert Schuman and his mentor in political philosophy, Jacques Maritain, were decidedly of the opinion that becoming America-like was the best thing that could happen to Europe. What they admired in the United States was summed up in a phrase from Abraham Lincoln’s legendary Gettysburg Address that both were fond of citing in which Lincoln extolled his country for having institutionalized government “of the people, by the people and for the people” (Schuman, 2000, 52; Maritain, 1964, 97). For both of them this was anything but an empty phrase; rather, it put its finger on what was missing in war-torn Europe in the first half of the last century. Indeed, for Jacques Maritain it was nothing less than the best definition of democracy. Whereas Schuman’s admiration for the sovereignty of the people in the United States was largely from afar, Maritain’s enthusiasm was based upon extensive first-hand experience of

nearly fifteen years of living in the United States from 1939 when he fled the Nazi conquest of France until his retirement from Princeton University in 1956 (except for the 3 years he spent as French ambassador to the Vatican in the later 40s). Moreover, that enthusiasm was deeply rooted in concrete encounters with Americans while living in New York, Princeton and Chicago. Indeed, his esteem for the United States was sufficiently great to move him to hold three lectures on America at the University of Chicago in 1956, later published as a book, incorporating those effusive, but by no means uncritical, *Reflections upon America*. They are worth the attention of European Christian Democrats today because, as Maritain himself emphasized, they are continuous with the central tenets in the political philosophy that so deeply influenced Robert Schuman's concept of Europe. Precisely on that account relevant to the political malaise that is typical of today's crisis-ridden European Union's including the so-called "democracy deficit". So there are at least *prima facie* grounds for being sceptical about pooh-poohing the relevance of the American experience to a European Union in search of itself.

What does the United States have to offer to the European Union? Why is it fundamentally mistaken to despair of a "United States of Europe". Why did two of the most important European founding fathers take a position radically to the contrary considering the United States to be nothing less than a *model* for the new Europe that they envisioned? How is the American experience of unification relevant in Europe today? These are questions that need to be answered. In order answer them it will do well to reflect a bit on early American constitutional history, which contains crucial reminders of the importance as well as the difficulty of striving for "ever closer union" for Europeans. Briefly, a solid case can be made that the United States of America, on the basis of both its institutional structures and the spirit of social hope that vivifies those institutions, is capable of dealing precisely with the sorts of issues and exclusions that lead Europeans to despair of the Union's future in the midst of the current crises. To be sure, it is less that Europeans should find straightforward solutions to European problems in America than that they should profit from the understanding the problems that have driven the development of American institutions as they relate them to their own. A study of those problem fields and the institutional solutions that have been found for them ought to illuminate contemporary European discussions of, say, federalism. Here America's beginnings are particularly relevant.

Uniting America's original thirteen colonies was not a simple matter. In fact the initial effort to do so failed miserably in a way that was obvious to everyone; moreover, it did so for reasons that ought to be recognizable to Europeans today, so similar are the problems facing those who would create a state out of existing political units. The fact that the American colonies were (somewhat) more homogeneous and considerably younger than their European counterparts should not mislead us here. Briefly, throwing off the British yoke was something that only all thirteen colonies together could accomplish. However, when the Second Continental Congress met in 1775

there was very little sense of a common identity despite the desperate need to carry on the war for independence from Britain together. Citizens of the colonies certainly did not think of themselves as Americans then. The issues which pressed the need for union upon the reluctant colonies can be grouped under at least three rubrics: 1) diplomatic matters bearing upon alliances, war and peace, 2) matters of trade and taxation and a common currency, 3) contested matters between the states such as boundaries and western expansion. The Articles of Confederation, passed by the Continental Congress in 1777 but only ratified by all the states in 1781, incorporated several efforts to specify the form of co-operation that the common undertaking of thirteen very different political entities required (Feinberg, 2002). Those differences can scarcely be overestimated: some of the colonies were free, others slave-holding; some were small, others were large; some had (relatively) large populations, others were large in the sense of being wealthy without necessarily having a huge population. These latter considerations were of paramount importance in determining an answer to the crucial question: how should the cost of financing the war be equitably distributed. It would be this issue, in fact a form of financial crisis, upon which the *Articles* would founder, that would force them into a federation with strong central authority. From the start the Congress could only do what the individual colonies allowed and that meant very little, so anxious were they to protect their individual sovereignty. Thus, after the war the individual colonies concerned themselves first and foremost with the repayment of their own debts without any consideration of the common debt at all. Since the Congress could not levy taxes, it was incapable of paying its debts, for example, to France, which had largely financed the war (the descendants of Pierre-Augustine Caron de Beaumarchais, creator of the *Marriage of Figaro* and the *Barber of Seville* as well as a wealthy supporter of the fledgling country, for example, were only repaid the debt owed to him more than fifty years after the Revolutionary War ended and some thirty-six years after his death). By the end of the war the “Continental”, the currency that Congress had produced were inflated to the point of worthlessness. Without the power to tax Congress was helpless. That helplessness had far-reaching consequences. After the war Congress found itself incapable of paying the minute 625 man army that it maintained. Military action against the Spanish, who closed New Orleans to American commerce or the Barbary pirates, who held American ships for ransom was impossible because the government simply had no money. The founders of the articles strove to establish a weak union and they got what they wanted much to the young state’s detriment. The problem was that this very weakness prevented them from solving their common problems. So the order of the day had to be “back to the drawing board”: a constitution was necessary to create a “more perfect union” as the preamble put it in a phrase that is decidedly more dramatic than meets the eye today. From the very start, then, the issue of states’ rights (as it is called) over against the federal government was an absolutely central tension within American politics as it remains to be down to today. As already noted there were problems about representation from the

beginning bearing upon the different sizes of the states and, indeed, the very way of determining size itself. However, those problems did not end there. From the start it was less than clear that representatives were first and foremost representatives of something that we today might term the American people as a whole or merely the representatives of their constituents in the individual states. This, like all of the quandries discussed here, is a problem that any large state made up of constituent states necessarily must face. The United States is, if you like, the laboratory, where the first serious experiments in large-scale democracy were carried out. It is for that reason that those experiments, both the successful ones and the less successful ones are important for Europe today (as they are for any large-scale form of democracy).

The sad state of affairs in the wake of the Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union, to give them their full name, left little choice but to convene yet another assembly initially to emend the Articles and thus to provide the basis for a robust union with an effective central government. The result, produced between the end of May and late September 1787 was the US Constitution as we know it. It is far beyond the scope of this presentation to supply anything like an account of all of the achievements involved. Yet, a couple of crucial points can be made here. The document stipulates a clear separation of powers between the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government with a view (along the lines of the model that Montesquieu adopted from Polybius) to establishing a harmonious system of “checks and balances” between the various branches of government in which no single one of them dominated over the other two. However, those checks and balances should were also present in the very structures that create legislation. It is noteworthy, for example that the very first clause of the constitution takes up the problem of achieving something resembling equality between the states on the basis of a bi-cameral legislature, a lower chamber, the House of Representatives, in which population distribution determines the number of representatives, who are directly elected, and an upper chamber, the Senate, in which each state had equal number of representatives (originally appointed by the respective state legislatures). Thus the principle of majority rule was balanced by recognition of the equality of the constitutive political entities. It is hard to see how a populous, culturally diverse country with several dozen political units with in it could be equitably governed otherwise. Some such development is in all likelihood part of the European Union’s future given its current state of disarray and this enormous challenges facing it. Be that as it may, the system of checks and balances wisely recognizes that government is always enmeshed, not only in controversies about specific policies, but also in what might be termed “fields” of political controversy in which those policy discussions are embedded, starting with the question of “states rights”, which never really disappear and bear a curious resemblance to European debates about subsidiarity. that change from time to time but the tension between the center and the periphery will always be present in one form or other. In any case, the same first article that establishes the nature of the legislature endows

it with the right to tax and stipulates what tax money can be used for, i.e., sustaining the military. Also unlike the Articles the constitution explicitly states that congress has the right to regulate commerce between the states. To make long story short, America's political unity was the result of realizing that severe financial crisis can only be coped with on the basis of increasing federal power. However, that by no means implies an absolute transfer of authority from local to federal government once and for all. Without using the word Americans are very conscious of the importance of subsidiarity as a way of conceiving the relations between federal, state and local authority. At the same time, they are aware that the boundaries between these authorities are always politically contested, i.e., that politics pervades public life, which for that reason must be based upon civility with respect to dissent – something that Americans are sadly prone to forget from time to time with the civil war (the most destructively brutal war in history up to then) as the prime example. When civility disappears from public life, we end up those particularly ugly modes of intransigence that characterize American politics from time to time to the despair of many Americans and their friends internationally. Naturally, incivility and the populism that frequently accompanies it stokes the fires of America's critics including some European's, whose totally dismissive attitude to the USA rests upon a highly one-sided perspective on its complex development. Be that as it may, what is certainly clear is that the founding fathers built a certain transparency into American politics that, dismaying as it sometimes might seem, more or less ensures that you get what you see. The point is that America is always a bit better off than it seems to be because its political institutions further dynamic, critical spirits. Hardly anybody understood that better than Jacques Maritain, to whom it is necessary to return by way of conclusion. The reasons for his virtually boundless admiration for the United States explains a lot about the political values that make America what it is.

It was the spirit of the American people, something that Maritain experienced in the concrete in his encounters with the likes of Saul Alinsky, John U. Nef, Dorothy Day, Mortimer Adler and Walter Lippmann to name but a few and not as a mere abstraction (Döring, 180 *et passim*). On Maritain's view "the democratic way of life at work in everyday existence" (Maritain, 1964, 95) was what made American society the best and fullest instance of political society yet to emerge. Such a society was *au fond* Christian both in its historical roots and above all in spirit precisely because in America "the tears and sufferings of the persecuted and the unfortunate are transmuted into a perpetual effort to improve human destiny and the make life bearable; they are transfigured into optimism and creativity." (Maritain, 164 50) Briefly, what often has been the source of resignation and withdrawal from public affairs in Europe has, in the best of circumstances, a way of pressing Americans to participate in them. To be sure Maritain was under no illusions that America was perfect: he clearly saw and analysed her enormous problems coming to grips with the evil forces set into motion by greed, sexuality and above all racial prejudice there. He insightfully sensed a hidden conflict between the

spirit of the people, the values that motivate them unreflectively in everyday life, and the logic of action that their social structures imposed upon them, the rituals of industrial civilization, as he called them. Thus he perceived in the dynamics of American life a form of social hope that was potentially capable of rising to the challenges that confronted Americans. What Americans needed to be able to realize their own potential was an explicit philosophy (Maritain, 1964, 58-71) that would articulate the values that Americans put into practice daily. To be sure the “public philosophy” that he advocated was hardly not the sort of thing that could be developed in courses and textbooks in the first instance but existential reflection on the values required for a thriving common life that issues in practicing those values. The potential implicit in unreflective practice should be actualized in reflective practice (to put a Thomistic twist upon a commonplace notion in business education today, Schön, 1983) Moreover, Maritain was certainly not alone in his pursuit of such a “philosophy” for America and *a-fortiori* the West. Shortly before Maritain’s Chicago lectures the social critic Walter Lippmann had published his celebrated *Essays in the Public Philosophy* whose aims was to make Americans aware that political leadership was less a matter of creating policy in accord with popular sentiments, i.e., with what is perceived as winning votes, than it was of working for what was objectively good for society (Lippmann, 1955, 28). Of course, the latter is neither uncontroversial nor easy to determine but the point is that the on-going debates about public policy ought to be grounded the substance of the issues and not merely in political whims In terms more familiar to us today his impassioned plea was for an open society pursuing the common good on the basis upon civil courage and thus have an heroic dimension. He and Maritain had been in contact since 1939 when Maritain was still in France and Lippmann’s project was first taking shape. Both Maritain and Lippmann took civility to be of the very essence of public life and each in his own particular way strove to promote civility by exemplifying it. The Christian potential that Maritain perceived in American public life was not something that could be developed theoretically, not the kind of thing that social scientists analyse (which is not to deny the relevance of their investigations), but a matter of concrete action on the basis of the collective wisdom acquired through reflective practice of engaged citizens. For Maritain there was great hope for realizing Christian values in American society precisely because the seat of American politics was the *community*. This is what distinguished American politics from its European party-focussed counterpart: “historically, the great fact is that this country was born of politico-religious communities whose own autonomous behaviour, traditions and self-government have left an indelible impression on the general mood of the American people” (Maritain, 1964, 93) Moreover the very plurality of those communities formed “a swarming multiplicity” of self-organized associations that buzzed with efforts to realize common concerns albeit not without their tensions. The centrality of the community in American life carried with it a certain distrust of The State but formed a perfect breeding-

ground for a vital democracy capable of realizing brotherly love when citizens are capable of rising to the challenges they confront.

If this is at all right, then the cry for more Europe is in a sense a cry for more America, i.e., an appeal to understand and learn from the American experience in the course of creating the robust federalism that today's Europe requires and ultimately in shaping a truly European identity

## **II Re-vitalizing the Center: Pluralism and the Common Good in Europe Today**

The problem is that the EU is hesitating to say what it finds unacceptable. The EU reaction [to the anti-democratic policies of Fidesz] have to come in the first instance from European conservatives. They have to make it clear to Fidesz, that right and left do not exclude one another in a European democracy but mutually dependent upon each other as partners.

Rudolf Ungváry (*Salzburger Nachrichten*, 30.04.2011)

This quotation should serve to remind us that the kinds of considerations that motivated Jacques Maritain and Robert Schuman to argue for a new form of heroic, revolutionary politics for Europe have lost none of their relevance in the last sixty years. There is most definitely still a challenge to Christian Democratic politicians to protect the political values upon which Europe has been built. It can never be taken for granted that a stable political center will hold. The populism (the Tyranny of the Majority in the age of the media) that feeds upon the idea that the European Union dictates to rather than represents European citizens threatens Europe both on the right and on the left. Creating a stable center for political action was and is the main task of European democratic politics both in the national states and the European Union. It remains so. The emergence of a hapless, fundamentally unstable because unsound coalitions throughout Europe should serve to remind us how much Europe needs to concentrate upon that project. However, Ungváry also reminds us that the onus of creating that center was and remains on the right-center. For that reason it is of the utmost importance for Christian Democrats to remind themselves of the fundamental character of the political challenge of “continuously creating” (R. Schuman) a stable center for European politics. The first thing to say in the matter is precisely that the task is indeed a political challenge and one that only has a political solution. “Economic reform needs political reform, and in the precise sense of trying to create a political system and a civic culture (Crick 2005, 224).” However, that solution must be based upon commitment to sound political values. Without a firm basis in political philosophy there can scarcely be a stable framework for political development in society and sustainable policy choices. That was the basis of European Christian Democracy at its foundation and remains so. This is surely a matter of values but they are first and foremost political values in the sense that they are constitutive of genuine political culture of which three are crucial for revitalizing the European center: those connected with the primacy of politics, the ethics of discourse and the creation of a European common good. They create the framework, the stable center, for developing sustainable policies based on a reliable moral consensus.

## **The Primacy of Politics: Hidden Strength in the Aristotelian Tradition**

European unity cannot be first and foremost a matter of economics. Jacques Maritain well understood why – even if he expressed himself in a way that hardly anybody would today. Consider the following reflections made in the midst of the Great Depression in 1933.

Economic crises are a pressing invitation to do metaphysics. Competent authorities affirm that the most terrible economic crises with all their absurd results – here they burn grain and coffee; there millions of workers are unemployed – are the result of scientific rationalization of techniques of production or more generally of the matter of economic life without any corresponding reflection on the rationality of production itself and everything that is human in economic life. However, rationalizing humanity without knowing what it is to be human is no more possible than rationalizing production in a factory without knowing that it is a factory. It is necessary to know what it is to be human – a metaphysical, even a theological, task. Ethics, which can be regarded as the rationalization of the use of liberty necessarily presupposes, it requires, metaphysics. It is not possible to construct ethics without first answering the questions: what is it to be human? What is the end of human life? (Maritain, 1933, pp. 16-17)

Thus Maritain insisted that it is not possible to regulate life reasonably without first reflecting upon what it is to be reasonable in the first place. It is not necessary to explore his way of articulating that thesis here to grasp its point: acting responsibly means acting rationally, which in turn requires that we understand what rationality is. In this he drew upon the practical philosophy of Aristotle and his most brilliant pupil St. Thomas Aquinas in articulating what it is for a Christian to do justice to the “things that are Caesar’s” and the exact nature of the relationship between the secular and the religious sphere as Maritain would. If we are to understand the challenge that Maritain’s pluralism presents to Christian Democrats – indeed, to any committed democrats – in Europe today as we seek to firm up a sagging center in European politics, we need to return to examine yet more closely and explicitly than Maritain himself did the foundations of Aristotle’s thinking about politics in its most general lines in order to introduce a robust notion of pluralism in politics and, ultimately, to be in a position to pose the Maritainian question about what the notion of a European common good could possibly mean.

Of course, it will certainly strike many Europeans, even Christian Democrats, as curious indeed to have to take this seemingly large step backwards into history. So we shall do well to begin by considering the views of two undeniably important contemporary thinkers Amartya Sen and Friedrich von Hayek with respect to the relevance of Aristotle’s concept of politics to our contemporary social and political concerns. We shall discover

that it is, in fact, hardly a step backwards at all but presents a challenging perspective for any democratic culture especially that of Europe today.

In a study in philosophy and economics as notable as it is humane Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen has produced an important contribution to the classical modern contractarian tradition in political thought stemming from John Locke with his *The Idea of Justice* (Sen, 2009). Sen's book is a sympathetic critique of, as well as a corrective to, the now classical view of John Rawls that "justice is fairness" drawing much of its inspiration from another more or less philosophically neglected part of that tradition, namely that stemming from Adam Smith -- indeed, using Smith deftly as a foil to Rawls. That critique proceeds from the eminently sensible premise that any purely rule-based account of justice of the sort that Rawls produced will be radically deficient and must be supplemented by a procedural account of justice, i.e., an account based upon the practices (i.e., the concrete cultural situation) within which our ideas about justice are embedded in terms of which those ideas may be said to live. His alternative account of justice proceeds from the fact that, despite all of our disagreements about moral values, it is often possible to identify redoubtable, i.e., patent, injustice. The idea is that ordinary people can often recognize injustice when it is done is moral bedrock for Sen. Moreover, he draws our attention to the fact that this is not only typical of western culture. Identifying redoubtable injustice is part and parcel of ethics in his Indian tradition (the Arab Spring is another timely case in point). Sen rightly takes this to imply that, however much questions about justice are embedded in other contested cultural, moral and political issues as they certainly are, there is a sense of decency, for want of a better word, that transcends cultural differences (which Jacques Maritain would have considered a *de facto* appeal to natural law). Sen's valiant efforts to transcend the limitations of the classical liberal position without departing from its fundamental individualistic conceptual framework only manages to succeed in a strained, struggling. The social remains at best a sphere of altruistic activity more or less grafted upon *homo oeconomicus*.

In fact, Aristotelian politics, as we shall see, begin exactly at the point where Sen's arrives after enormous exertion (see also the appendix to this chapter). Strangely, Sen explicitly recognizes and even emphasizes the enormous importance of Aristotle's profound view of "the pervasive demands of participatory living" (Sen, 2009, 322) but, curiously, the idea plays absolutely no role in the development of his concept of procedural justice. Sen argues persuasively that justice can be realized in fair policies if we strain ourselves to convert deep-seated disagreements into rational debates; whereas the promise and the strength of Aristotle, as Sen himself recognizes (and as we shall see below), is precisely that the mutual recognition of fundamental differences/radical disagreement characteristic of the actions of the true politician helps to create just procedures of arguing about political matters, which are recognized as such. Aristotelian politics is what Walter Lippmann termed a *public philosophy* (Lippmann, 1955, pp. 72-108), i.e., *political practice reflected upon on the basis of collective moral experience of intelligent citizens*, not a theory

in the speculative classical modern sense. It is, in any case, a much simpler way to the goal than the traditional Locke-Rawls path, even as it has been admirably revised by Sen.

Another way of appreciating the importance of Aristotle's concept of politics and democracy for Europe today is to compare them with Friedrich von Hayek's views of the matter. Reading Aristotle's texts on democracy in his *Politics* one discovers an astonishing similarity to Hayek's discussion of "dogmatic democrats" in his treatment of majority rule (Hayek, 2006, 93). That similarity is particularly noteworthy given Hayek's complete rejection of the Aristotelian idea of distributive justice (Hayek, 87-88, 203-204). For Hayek, as for Aristotle himself (cf. Cartledge, 2009, 102), there is a permanent danger that democrats fall into the hands of demagogues, who enrich themselves and their entourage at the expense of society in the name of the people. The danger with demagogues and dogmatic democrats is that they abuse majority rule for their own benefit. Hayek's insistence that the chief danger to society lies in unlimited government, in all crucial respects, parallels Aristotle's insistence that a "mixed" form of government, i.e., one in which both the interests of a privileged elite co-exist with those of the unprivileged masses is most conducive to human thriving (Aristotle, 1992, IV, ix, 1294a30-1294b41). Both Hayek's liberal democracy and Aristotle's "polity" are distinguished by being self-limiting forms of government. Above all, both stress that it is the rule of law that is the indispensable foundation for politics. Moreover, both liberal democracy and polity are for that very reason distinguished as schools for learning what politics is actually all about. The two are much closer to one another than meets the eye. In any case, the intellectual proximity of Hayek to Aristotle is something that we ignore at our peril

It would be tedious and certainly beyond the scope of this paper to try to present Aristotle's political philosophy systematically here but it is possible to summarize the framework in which his discussion of politics – and ethics – is developed and their implications for contemporary European political discussion in a series of points that capture the substance and spirit of his political philosophy. It is worth reminding ourselves here that the point of our exercise is twofold: 1) to deepen our appreciation of the kind of foundations that Jacques Maritain provided for Robert Schuman's vision of Europe and 2) to get a sense of the challenge that these 'old' ideas continue to present to Europe today.

First of all, Aristotle insists that politics is a *natural* activity: the human being is a political animal as he puts it. However, it is not at all clear how this assertion should be understood. Recent study has shown that it goes far beyond a superficial analogy with the collective character of the lives of bees and ants (Labarrère, 2004, 2005). These studies indicate that what is often taken to be a casual remark is the result of extensive painstaking observation the conditions under which animals including humans band together, communicate, act and ultimately thrive. For the first time we have a clear picture of the animal dimension of, say, practical reasoning and ethics in

humans complementing, strange as it may seem, the deepest insights of modern sociobiology (Labarrière, 2004, 13ff.). These new developments in Aristotelian scholarship are important for us because Aristotelians, including Jacques Maritain, have tended to demarcate the differences between humans and other animals much more sharply than The Stagirite ever did. These studies have shown that Aristotle's generalization that humans are political animals has been made on the basis of astute comparative study, which is not simply a pronouncement upon the central role of politics in human life but a reminder about how it is that politics is rooted in a sociality and sociability that we share with other members of the animal kingdom. Through an elaborate network of comparisons especially bearing upon modes of communication between animals including humans, it becomes clear that humans are the most political of animals, whose political nature can profitably be studied on the basis of detailed comparisons with ants, bees, birds, etc.. In doing so they demonstrate in strikingly modern way how it is that the human family and human citizenship are deeply rooted in nature itself and ultimately that politics (as the effort to attain compromise in the face of basic differences of opinion) is anything but the 'necessary evil' power game that it is taken to be in much modern political thought after Machiavelli and Hobbes. On the contrary, the human animal's way of thriving entails collective self-determination on the basis of arguments in the face of basic disagreements about essential matters such as the distribution of power and wealth in society that thus become the subject of hefty debate. Human sociability entails such strong, if not violent, disagreement among individuals as well as the possibility of resolving that disagreement reasonably on the basis of persuasion.

That brings us to our second point about Aristotle's view of politics, namely, that it is *rational* activity and not mere cunning power-brokering as it has tended to be thought of in the tradition from Machiavelli and Hobbes. However, the kind of reasoning involved is very different from "scientific" reasoning which seeks universal explanations for natural phenomena (see Aristotle 1925/1987, Bk. VI, 1138b18-1145a11, cf. Aubenque, 1986, pp. 56-61). Political reasoning, on the other hand, is a matter of choosing courses of action in concrete situations on the basis of personal experience. It involves making fine distinctions between similar but nevertheless different situations in which there is always the possibility that an intangible factor of chance is involved. Briefly, practical reasoning, as opposed to theoretical reasoning, is a matter what is sometimes referred to today as personal or tacit knowing (Polanyi, 1974; cf. Janik, 1996); it is not the sort of thing that can be learned from books or lectures but only on the basis of doing things successfully. For Aristotle political knowledge is practical wisdom, the zenith of ethical insight, drawn from experience and issuing directly in recognizably laudable action (Bodéüs, 2004, *passim*). At the same time such reliable insight into practical activities is the basis of sound political leadership. Such insight is, above all, insight into one's own limits in a given situation. Lacking it a person is doomed to failure. However, there is something worse than that; for it is

possible, not only to fail in performing a given task but inadvertently to make the situation worse rather than better.

Here we arrive at a third crucial point about the Aristotelian concept of politics: political leadership always runs the risk of plummeting itself into tragedy. The opposite of political knowledge is not ignorance but failure and the worst case scenario failure that one has brought upon one's self. The classical case in point is that of Oedipus, who wants to protect Thebes from the plague only to discover to his own horror that he himself has brought it upon the city by killing his own father and marrying his mother without having been aware of it. It is not the least significant aspect of Aristotle's conception of politics and political leadership that the kinds of situations that political knowledge should be able to cope with are always potentially tragic (Aubenque, 1986, pp. 155-177). So it is not for nothing that Jacques Maritain would compare the political state of affairs in France in the period leading up to World War II with an Aeschylean tragedy. In politics we can never be certain that we are doing the right thing in the right way at the right time under the right circumstances. Being well-intentioned is not enough; it is not only compatible with failure but with self-destruction, politics at its worst. Briefly, tragedy either in the form the Fickle Finger of Fate or the situation of finding ourselves bound by completely conflicting obligations, implies that we have reached the limits of human reason, i.e., in Maritain's terms the point where politics needs religion. Be that as it may, we remain faced with the question, what, then, is good politics?

The question is perennial; we seek every bit as much to answer it as Aristotle and his contemporaries did. Yet, one of the reasons that Aristotle is such an extraordinary guide in matters of political philosophy is that at just the point where we await a straightforward answer to a straightforward question he makes a distinction that forces us to rethink our very subject of discussion. In this case, he confronts with a distinction between "good" politics and "true" politics, which is the fourth extraordinary point about his conception of politics. In fact it is the fundamental distinction upon which all of Aristotle's thinking on the subject is based. Good politics, unsurprisingly, is *effective* politics, lawgiving that is efficient, that accomplishes the aims of the lawgiver, whatever they may be. However, those aims can be noble or base, legitimate or illegitimate. In fact, Aristotle seems to think that most legislators who merely pursue good politics do so for unworthy ends. In an absolutely crucial, if largely ignored, passage he writes, "most politicians fail to merit the name in truth; for their politics is not genuine. The real politician chooses to perform noble deeds for their own sake; whilst the majority pursue politics for money and unseemly profit" (Aristotle, 1935, I, 5 1216 a 23-27; cf. Bodéüs, 2004, p. 6 – understanding power and prestige as subsumed under the rubric "unseemly profit."). Whether this distinction seemed as strange to his contemporaries, as it does to us, remains to be seen; however, it is certainly not unheard of that politicians ply their art with less than noble purposes in our world. What is crystal clear is that this view of true politics as, in the final analysis, as devoted to the common good of society and not merely individual

interests has an immense potential for social criticism today in it -- not something that we typically associate with Aristotle but, nevertheless, most definitely an essential part of his program for political philosophy. The crucial point is that any politics worth pursuing must transcend vested interests. Insisting that the public good, the common good, as opposed to a person's individual good, is the goal of genuine political activity, Aristotle puts worlds between his view of politics and the typically modern individualistic point of view, i.e., that of Hobbes or Machiavelli and their avatars today, who have to consider The Stagirite to be a madman. Thinking about politics with Aristotle thus involves refreshingly re-thinking our most basic assumptions about the nature of the political enterprise as such. Little wonder that his view of politics should have appealed to Jacques Maritain in the middle of the greatest crisis Europe ever faced. Of course, it cannot be the case that this "noble" dimension of politics is always entirely lacking in political practice but that it plays no role whatsoever in more conventional modern views of the subject. The point is that the "nobility" that Aristotle speaks about can never be derived from the cynicism that is normally taken to be the basis of modern politics and thus appears to us, as it did to many of Aristotle's contemporaries as something extraneous to politics rather than its defining characteristic, as it is with him. An Aristotelian politics demands that cynicism in public be a matter of shame to be explained rather than extolled as 'Realpolitik'. Cynicism apart, it is possible to pursue "good" politics in a technocratic Mandarin manner that neglects "true" politics, which is exactly what the critics of the democracy deficit in the European Union allege.

In any case, the fifth point of interest with respect to Aristotle's view of politics is the idea that politics as such is an educating or civilizing activity (Aristotle, 1962/1981, III, xiii, 1283a23-1284b34). No small part of Aristotle's importance for us today follows from his idea that genuine autonomy, real freedom, is a matter of governing upon the basis of intelligent judgments about what is good of the whole of society, which are recognizable as such. This is particularly important to him because he clearly recognizes something that we do too, namely, that society is constituted by two conflicting interest groups, the few and the many, the "haves" and the "have-nots", a wealthy minority and a wanting majority. Either they engage in mortal combat in the question of the possession of wealth and power or they find ways of compromise with respect to its distribution. In that situation, i.e., where it is clear that the majority recognizes that it is thoroughly reasonable to rule for the sake of the minority as well as for its own, it is reasonable for the minority to consent to be ruled. Since the very nature of democratic politics assumes that transfer of power occurs at regular intervals, to be politically active means to alternate between ruling and being ruled. Accepting that fact, which is, in fact, nothing other than accepting what has come to be termed the rule of law: "it is preferable that law should rule rather than any single one of the citizens" (Aristotle, 1962/1981, 1287a20; cf. Bingham, 2010, 3). That involves submitting ourselves to the discipline involved in waiting until we have the majority behind us to pursue what we take to be reasonable policies. Patience

turns out to be a primary political virtue on this account. Submitting ourselves to that discipline involves learning about the uses of power to form policy intelligently. The true politician is one who learns to rule on the basis of having been ruled. Politicians thus learn to assert their interest discreetly; for they know from experience what it is to be under the rule of another. Just politics, which is recognized as such can only be pursued on the basis of knowing from experience what sorts of policies actually serve the common good here and now. Without such practical insight gained from being ruled it is not possible to be a successful lawgiver.

In order to legislate successfully for the whole of society the true statesman has to know, not only what the opposition thinks but how it thinks in order to pursue the crucial business of *persuading* the opposition of the reasonableness of his/her measures. Pursuing politics as a rational activity turns it into a conciliatory activity based upon recognizing differences between legitimate interests and confronting those differences in the effort to produce a recognizably reasonable reconciliation between them. This implies that s/he is capable of understanding not only what opposed positions mean but how opposed factions reason in maintaining their opposition, which, in turn, entails knowing how the opposition establishes and evaluates evidence for advancing its positions, what rules it falls back upon in interpreting the significance of, or drawing conclusions from, that evidence and therefore what might possibly count against that data in their eyes etc. In short, wise politicians should understand the reasoning of their opponents at least as well as, if not better than, their political opponents themselves do. Thus Aristotle's advocacy "polity" or mixed government corresponding to what we would today understand as liberal democracy in which power could pass back and forth from the cultivated, propertied elite to the unprivileged many thus involved a challenge on the part of both groups to overcome the short-sightedness of the perspective dictated by brute material interest for the sake of the common good. In that sense practicing genuinely effective politics entails being involved in a civilizing learning process.

Few contemporary European political thinkers have understood the radical implications of Aristotle's way of understanding politics better than the late center-left English political scientist Sir Bernard Crick. To begin with Professor Crick has provocatively insisted that, "politics, it is still important to labor the old Aristotelian point, is both historically and logically prior to democracy (Crick, 2005, p. 206)." The crucial point at stake here is that it is all too easy for us to be complacent about "democracy". The mere existence of democratic institutions or even the interest of the majority (as Alexis de Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill well knew) in a given society in no way guarantees that the society in question is free – something that, sadly, a cursory glance at many of the countries in the third world will verify. "Democracy" has tended to be a term with only positive connotations on Crick's view; he rightly insists that it is a "promiscuous" term that violates all sorts of linguistic proprieties and accumulates a set of very strange bedfellows. Despite his origins on the left Professor Crick has learned enough from

Friedrich von Hayek to consider liberty – and with it the project of creating a solid political center in democratic societies -- to be the main preoccupation of political activity including political theory. Totalitarianism and tyranny, including the tyranny of the majority -- but no less anarchy -- are its enemies. Democracy implies freedom only when its institutions are permeated with the civilizing activity that is true politics from which stable order and legitimate authority emerge. Without it there must be a ‘democracy deficit’ in any putatively democratic society despite the existence of democratic institutions. Politics breathes life into democracy; it is the spirit that vivifies the letter. To have said this, of course, is to challenge the widespread view that ‘politics’ is a way of doing things fundamentally by force behind closed doors – the ‘iron hand in the velvet glove’ as it were. Crick insists that this is precisely what politics is *not* – and Aristotle is his authority (just as he was Jacques Maritain’s). So, like Hayek, Crick both has a good deal to complain about with respect to the ways that the term democracy has been misused (Hayek, p. 90ff; Crick, pp. 38-53). Indeed, he goes so far as to insist that an essential part of his defence of the idea that politics is the cradle of liberty entails defending politics *from* democracy (without in any way espousing anything in the least undemocratic, Crick, 2005, Ch. 3, pp. 38-53). That requires a certain elaboration; for it is of central importance in today’s Europe.

Crick’s point of departure is really that in the course of the last hundred years we have come to think of democracy as something that is always and everywhere good to the point of being beyond criticism; whereas politics has suffered the opposite fate. This entails a fundamental conceptual confusion, which has become typical within western discourse since World War I when it became imperative to “keep the world safe for democracy”. Meanwhile to speak of something as a ‘political’ decision is almost tantamount to asserting that it is a decision that in fact rests upon motives verging upon base self-interest on the part of an individual or a group.

Professor Crick proceeds, on the contrary, from the notion that the word family of ‘democratic’ phenomena refers first and foremost to a set of institutions, which can or cannot facilitate the development of liberty in society depending upon the nature of the activity, that informs them. Genuinely political activity breathes the spirit of freedom into democratic institutions by producing compromises that reconcile profoundly divided interests and thereby produce *harmony* in society. “Politics are, as it were, the market place and the price mechanism of all social demands – though there is no guarantee that a just price will be struck; and there is nothing spontaneous about politics – it depends on deliberate and continuous individual activity (Crick, 2005, 9).” His emphasis upon compromise is anything but a matter of being wishy-washy; for the a political compromise in the Crick’s Aristotelian sense of the term is a matter *conciliation* that involves 1) the will to overcome a deep-seated conflict and 2) the intelligence to re-think conventionally accepted, tried and true understanding of what a given concept such as family, health, safety responsibility, or authority means. Conciliating activity producing social harmony is the “civilizing” effect of political activity. Thus

politics sensitizes us to the importance of revising our own way of seeing things critically in confrontation with the views of others and, most significantly, of modifying our behavior correspondingly. This is nothing other than the logic of “true politics” in Aristotle’s sense. Furthermore, it is nothing other than the search for a “common” good beyond the differences of interest that separate us: “this common good is itself the process of practical reconciliation of the interests of the various...aggregates or groups which compose a state; it is not some external and intangible spiritual adhesive or some objective ‘general will’ or ‘public interest’....The moral consensus of a free state is not something mysteriously prior to or above politics: it is the activity (the civilizing activity) of politics itself.” (Crick, 2005, 9). Thus morality enters into politics at its very heart: in discourse pursuing the goal of conciliation in the face of deep-seated conflicts about how wealth, power and prestige are to be distributed in society. The indispensable consensus that makes democracy democratic as it were is a consensus with respect to political procedures, that promises to facilitate further consensus with respect to substantive policy issues about the distribution of wealth, power and prestige in society. What is sometimes said of religious practice is in its way also true here: it is less that we are seeking a way to a goal but that the way is the goal to speak with Kierkegaard. Democracy, it turns out, comes into existence in the framework of morally-based political action, not in opposition to it. How is it to be attained? How do we achieve consensus? In order to answer these questions it is necessary to inquire further into the nature of pluralism.

## Appendix

### A Note on Civic Humanism, Machiavelli and Aristotelian Political Thought in the Modern Age

[Machiavelli was] “the sole retriever of *ancient Prudence*”  
James Harrington, cited in Crick, 2003, 25

The idea of the primacy of politics within democratic society can seem so strange to many of us today that it will do well to specify further the notion of the goal of politics as the constructive exploitation of social conflicts in the search for compromise on the basis of 1) reflection upon the notion of European civic humanism, 2) an account of Niccolò Machiavelli's crucial contribution to that concept in his often neglected *Discourses on Livy* (which, contrary to widespread opinion, is in fact his major political work) and 3) a brief sketch of the main lines of the tradition that connects The Stagirite with Jacques Maritain and Robert Schuman. Although this discussion may seem somewhat academic, it has major implications of what is involved in coping with the European “democracy deficit”. In addition, it will help us to see the historical origins of the interrelationships between, say, conflict, consensus and essential contestability that are central to this exposition.

Civic humanism designates “...a style of thought...in which... the development of the individual towards self-fulfillment is possible only when the individual acts as a citizen, that is as a conscious and autonomous participant in and autonomous decision-taking political community, the polis or republic” (Pocock, 1973, 85). In a superficial world so lacking in a reflective sense of its own values and the importance of the past for understanding and therefore forming the present it is all too simple to consider this extraordinarily radical definition of human happiness as innocuous when it is anything but that. From the point of view of the individual this perspective resolutely identifies human happiness not as possession of something be it wealth, fame, pleasure or whatever but with active participation in a political process of collective self-determination in the public sphere. Far from being something that sensible people suffer, politics, on this account is what human flourishing it all about. From the point of view of society it emphasizes genuinely social life is dependent upon the commitments that individuals make to engaged participation in collective decision-making in the context of conflicting interests. Briefly, civic humanism presupposes a vigorously honest and responsible, i.e., “virtuous”, citizenry, prepared to tolerate basic differences with respect to the carrying on public affairs and the strife that such differences entail for the sake of establishing and preserving the good of civic peace. The latter should always take precedence over egotistical self-interests in the process of creating an harmonious future for society at large of the sort that the American Founding Fathers envisioned in their constitution. In effect civic humanism entails an unshakeable commitment to the politics of

the center, which in fact is essentially to the mainstream of European thinking about politics and political life. However, it strikes many of us as very odd indeed that Niccolò Machiavelli, normally identified with the idea that all politics is power politics, should be perhaps the principal historical figure in the development of European civic humanism.

Jacques Maritain was certainly not the first to get Machiavelli wrong in asserting that a complete divorce between ethics and politics was at the center of the Florentine's thought and he will most assuredly not be the last to see him that way. The inclination to read Machiavelli exclusively through the lens of *The Prince* at the expense of the *Discourses* is deeply rooted in modern culture; indeed, it is a constitutive part of our political culture in the eyes of most people and has been for a long time. However, the eminent political theorist and Machiavelli expert John Pocock has argued with considerable learning and elegance that *The Prince* describes how a "corrupt" society must be governed if it is to be governed at all, namely by ignoring established moral values (Pocock, 1973, 88-91; cf. Pocock, 1975, *passim*) – which is by no means a matter of creating new ones for Machiavelli (Crick, 2003, 62-69). (This perspective is more in accord with Aristotelian than one might think because inasmuch as The Stagirite was himself prepared to go so far as offer advice to a tyrant upon how to maintain power Aristotle, 1961/1982, 1313a18ff.; cf. Crick, 2003, 25f.) In any case, a vital society is one that rules itself, i.e., a republic, rather than one ruled autocratically be it by an individual or a powerful oligarchy both of which tend to become corrupt over time precisely because they do not share power. Machiavelli's particular contribution to political thought in the Aristotelian tradition turns upon his emphasis upon the constructive role of tension and conflict in republican society.

Living in Renaissance Florence Machiavelli was acutely aware that political arrangements, like the lives of individuals, are permeated with the transitory: they have a life cycle of birth, development to maturity, decline and ultimately death: monarchy can – and does – decline into dictatorship (to employ anachronistic terms), aristocratic rule into arrogant oligarchy, popular sovereignty into licentious (democracy he would say). Autocracy on anybody's part leads to complacency and self-indulgence, which ultimately becomes self-destructive both for the ruler(s) and society. Humans can only exist securely in community but that security is essentially connected to social power (Machiavelli, 1970/2003, 102). How can the political power that is necessary for survival be most constructively channelled? So, the question of what sort of government leads to the greatest vitality and stability, given the permanent threat of "corruption", in society will be the point of departure for all of his considerations. The most genuinely vital form of government, i.e., the form least likely to become corrupt, turns out to be a mixed one (i.e., Aristotle's "polity" or republic) in which both the oligarchs' tendency to arrogant self-assertion and the popular tendency to license limit and discipline one another. "Corruption" is always the result of a lack of harmony or balance in ruling; conflict is a source of social health because it restores lost balance but that is only possible in a republic in which transfers of power are possible. Thus,

having dismissed the rule of hereditary regents as most prone to degeneration over time and therefore least stable, and identified the inherent weaknesses of oligarchy and “democracy” (as he understood it following Aristotle), Machiavelli centers his conception of healthy government upon the constructive force of social conflict between the few and the many (the rich and the poor, the cultivated and the banal, however we care to put it). Accepting the inevitable conflicts of interest between them becomes for the Machiavelli precisely what Aristotle termed “true politics”.

The Aristotelian notion of polity, as the Florentine articulates it, describes collective autonomy as form of government in a society in which “politics” is constituted peacefully by channelling the conflict between the two major interest groups in society. The key is the law. The development of socio-economic conflicts between Patricians and Plebeians in the Roman Republic as recounted by Livy (the ostensible subject of the *Discourses*) provides a paradigmatic example for understanding what “politics” in the Aristotelian sense is all about. The conflicts between those two elements in Roman society became a hammer and anvil for forging the most stable legal order that the world had seen up to Machiavelli’s time. In effect, it became the source of the idea that law is the political mode of realizing the common good in society and therefore that politics, pursuing interests vigorously in the public sphere, is itself a civilizing activity.

Here it is worth reminding ourselves that to “civilize” something or somebody literally means to make that person a citizen or those things *public*: they family of words surrounding the “civil” are after all nothing more than the Roman renderings of the Greek ideal of what is of the polis, i.e. “political”. However, Machiavelli adds an urgent sense of the importance of recognizing the power of conflicts as a source of social strength, a principle of dynamic development, is of a sort that we scarcely find in The Stagirite himself. The modern conception of republican life, democracy as we call it today especially in the Anglo-Saxon world, can be traced back to Machiavelli’s Aristotelian conception of political life. But that is to run ahead.

Machiavelli’s Aristotelian view of politics as having several senses, above all, as referring to a set of phenomena that includes both honest/living/vital forms as well as “corrupt” or degenerate variants is extraordinarily illuminating for us today with our impoverished understanding of the subject. We have been accustomed to considering under the rubric “politics” only what Machiavelli himself took to be the corrupt form of politics (power politics, *Realpolitik*). In doing that we have in fact turned Machiavelli on his head, which is really what rightly disturbed Jacques Maritain, about the problems entailed by becoming “modern” because in doing so we have confused ourselves hopelessly about what is arguably the most crucial aspect of human life. Little wonder that none other than Sir Bernard Crick should have provided a lengthy introduction to the standard English edition of the *Discourses* in aid of setting the story straight historically and, more importantly, telling us something absolutely crucial about our own political life. In any case, the idea that politics refers not merely one thing but

a variety of different things: institutions, individual actions, policies, judgments and attitudes etc. Above all what is “political” will usually be something that can be legitimately view both positively and negatively from different social perspectives is as crucial to our understanding of our own social lives as it is to Machiavelli and the Aristotelian tradition. We are all too inclined to see politics in Maritain’s “Machiavellian” sense, i.e., as entirely a matter of a virtually sado-masochistic exercise of power. But this is precisely what republican politics is not – and the reason why there are good grounds for asserting that there are no politics in totalitarian dictatorships (Crick, 2005, 18-37). In any case, we frequently consider ourselves to be the ‘victims’ of politics as the powers that be in the states in which we live, not least the European Union, exercise their authority in a seemingly arbitrary manner over us. “Politics” covers a multitude of sins and hardly anything constructive for many of us in most circumstances. Conversely, we do not tend see *ourselves* as acting politically but, more likely ethically, when, for example, we seek to criticize ‘politics as usual’ in our world. In effect, modern citizen tend to get bogged down in the sort of “Machiavellian” thinking that rightly drew Jacques Maritain’s scorn.

“Politics” (like ethics) is a term that we best approach as referring to a large “family” of loosely related activities and institutions, whose relations rest upon analogies of various sorts, whose ‘good’ or ‘bad’ character remains to be seen. What is political cannot be defined as forming a tightly knit a class with fixed criteria for membership. Reality is ‘fuzzier’ than all that. While it is true that many of those activities will bear upon how authority is employed in implementing specific direction in, say social policy, politics is every bit as much a matter of establishing forms of authorization and legitimation cooperatively in the way that we do, say, in founding a club for some purpose or other. In any case, re-thinking our concept of politics along genuinely Machiavellian lines as constituting the possibility of collective autonomy ought to be an important initial step in reorienting ourselves to the idea that political activity is essentially a matter of creating a vital center for our collective public decision-making; elements such as generosity and the character of the participants in political processes *inter alia* are essential factors in shaping successful policy as Machiavelli well understood (Machiavelli, 2003, 460, 466 respectively).

One puzzling aspect of Machiavelli’s republican project bears upon the question of just what kind of activity Machiavelli considered himself to be involved in as he wrote down these thoughts and, indeed, all of his reflections on politics (Crick, 2003, 47-63). The question of Machiavelli’s self-understanding rises because his aims do not fit terribly well into our usual schemes of thinking about politics – even though they should. Establishing how Machiavelli saw his own task in the *Discourses* will help us to get a grip on the nature of the activity we are involved in here ourselves as it relates to the practice of politics. Is he simply stating matters of common sense? Is he producing a theory or science of politics? Is his work to be considered political philosophy? A cursory glance at his writings ought to suffice to

convince the readers that he is not merely passing on the accepted wisdom of the ages in matters political. His examples are meticulously articulated and his book(s) abound in generalizations, which might tempt us to term him a political theorist. However, he does not advance anything that might be recognizably a theory in the sense that political scientists or political philosophers might acknowledge as such. It would be wholly anachronistic to think that he might even have been in a position to do so. Modern obsession with theories originated more than one hundred years after he wrote, so this way not an option for him. His concern is much more to supply citizens material for reflection on what politics is all about and above all with where its pitfalls lie. Thus his principle vehicle for reflection is the *example*. He wants to advise citizens about the best tried and true ways of pursuing politics (but he also wants to indicate, as he does in *The Prince*, how a “corrupt” society has to be dealt with – reverberations of which are clearly present in the *Discourses*). Further, he wants to make it abundantly clear that there are limits to what can be learned this way. In effect, Machiavelli is providing would be politicians with advice in a situation where thinking for yourself is the only solution. So he adumbrates to sorts of factors that you have to reflect upon if you are to pursue politics successfully.

So Machiavelli provides citizens with a set of concepts that permit them to analyse and evaluate courses of action in political life on their own. There are principally three concepts that are of particular assistance in understanding politics and its pitfalls. They are not entirely easy to render into modern English but they are not entirely obscure either (Crick, 2003, 54-62; cf. Skinner, 1988, 103-108;). The three are *Necessità*, *Fortuna* and *Virtù*. The Machiavellian sense of necessity might best be considered conditional necessity. It is certainly not absolute (or logical) necessity. Politicians always have to cope with situations, which have to be dealt with one at a time. The contingencies of those situations as well as human inconstancy dictate that politicians have to respond to them in all their singularity. Contingencies of time and place are always of paramount importance. That alone goes a long way to explaining why Machiavelli adamantly resists the temptation to formulate his views in terms of anything moderately resembling a theory. The subject is by its very nature simply not one that one can generalize about and therefore not one about which one can profitably theorize. If particularity were not sufficient for determining that stance, the role of *Fortuna* seals the fate of our power to generalize – indeed, to plan seals the fate of the would-be political theorist. Storms, droughts, earthquakes, the sudden death of confidantes or even enemies, unexpected events of all sort place limit on what even the most skilful human agent can foresee. There always exceptions to the rule, even where we least expect them (here too we find a powerful echo of the role of contingency in Aristotle’s ethico-political thought, cf. Aubenque, 1986, 64-105). Yet, the versed political leader can and must be able to take fate into his hands as it were. This is, among other things, what it means to have *Virtù*, by far the most difficult word in Machiavelli’s vocabulary for us to understand: a formidable combination of skill and daring in public affairs that

leads to success in all but impossible circumstances. Having *virtù* is knowing what is necessary in particular situations and improvising solutions cleverly when the Fickle Finger of Fate messes things up. Who would understand politics ignores these three factors at their peril.

This has all been in aid of explaining why it is not easy to understand what Machiavelli is up to in our terms. Above all he is not doing any of the sorts of things that the people who are most concerned with his ideas today do: he is not practicing political science nor sociology nor history of ideas nor political philosophy as we understand it but endeavouring to make a contribution to what Walter Lippmann termed the *public philosophy*, i.e., to political thinking in the form of moral reflections upon examples drawn from political experience and the literature on it such as Livy's *History of Rome*. So he is, like Walter Lippmann, a moralist drawing upon the insights of "the wise" into political life. And this, indeed, is what Aristotle's ethico-political thought is all about: acquiring insight into action for the sake of making ourselves and our society better: "otherwise our inquiry would have been of no use" (Aristotle, 1925/1987, 1103b28). Machiavelli would agree completely. If we misunderstand Aristotle on this point by, say, considering him as producing what we conventionally consider a political theory, we misunderstand him completely. He writes for moral agents and not scholars.

No small part of the weight of such a public philosophy bears upon the fact that it is built upon tradition. So we must turn briefly to consider certain basic facets of the Aristotelian tradition in western political thought. Our questions are: how did Machiavelli receive Aristotle, i.e., on the basis of what mediation? How did Machiavelli influence subsequent political thought down to the American Founding Fathers to whom both Robert Schuman and Jacques Maritain appealed in grounding a heroic revolutionary Christian politics? Considerations of space are such as to rule out all but the most radically abridged account of that tradition.<sup>2</sup> So it is clear that we run the risk

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<sup>2</sup> It will certainly strike some readers as strange, for example, that there is no separate treatment of the most prominent of all Aristotelian thinkers St. Thomas Aquinas in this overview. This is because our subject here is *republican* politics, a theme which is as such foreign to the thought of St. Thomas even if he should have certain insights. A leading authority upon Aquinas's political thought has gone so far as to insist that there are in a sense no politics in Aquinas. That is because political thought is a branch of ethics for him (D'Entreves, 1987, viii *et passim*). In a sense the Thomistic position and its contemporary relevance is incorporated in the discussion of Jacques Maritain's views above. A more significant omission from our centrist point of view on European politics is arguably a discussion of Dante's ideas in *Monarchia*, which are important for us in four respects: first, because, uniquely in the Aristotelian tradition (and no less unusual in the history of philosophy itself) he insists upon the primacy of practical philosophy over speculative thought; second, for his way of conceiving the goal of politics as producing concord in society in order to facilitate the development of universal human thriving; third, on account of his highly peculiar way of grounding his allegation that humans thrive only when they collectively strive to

of historical oversimplification in our efforts to highlight the chief contours of highly complex sets of ideas and their political contexts. It is therefore imperative to indicate that our aim is first and foremost political education and not historical and philosophical scholarship.

Aristotle reached Machiavelli as mediated through two important ancient sources, Polybius and Cicero. Posterity owes it to Polybius that the importance of Aristotle's political thought has been passed down to subsequent epochs (Pocock, 1973, 78-88). Aristotle was important for Polybius in explaining the internal stability that conferred upon Rome the power to dominate the Mediterranean. Three aspects of Aristotle's *Politics* were important in explaining that strength of 1) his analysis of the three forms of government: monarchical, aristocratic and popular 2) the idea that they all can degenerate and especially 3) the notion that it is balance between the constitutive elements in society that confer strength and vitality upon it. The state is only capable of coping with the vicissitudes of Fortune, i.e., "virtuous," when its parts: the tribunes, the consuls with the Senate and last but not least the people, are harmoniously co-ordinated, which was precisely what Rome achieved. States corrupt when a part dominates the whole which is the very essence of injustice in society at large. The three forces in society all strive to maximize their power and authority; whereas the good of society as a whole emerges from the way in which they limit each other. Thus arose the idea that the various elements within the government should form a system of "checks and balances", an idea which would inspire Montesquieu, whose *Espirit des lois*, in many ways an Aristotelian work (MacIntyre, 1966, 179) would become the Bible of Enlightenment constitutionalists and an inspiration to the American Founding Fathers as they conceived the relationship between the legislative, executive and judicial branches of the state they invented. Polybius was certainly an absolutely crucial influence upon Machiavelli's conception of republican government (as well as much other republican thinking right down to Montesquieu in the Age of Revolution).

The *De republica* of Marcus Tullius Cicero was a work that further built upon the idea of the mixed constitution that Polybius had adopted from Aristotle. Cicero argued that the Roman constitution was in fact the best mixed constitution that there had ever been (which in the context of the transition to empire that was transpiring in Cicero's day was an appeal for restoration of a lost ideal). Whereas Polybius wrote as an historian; Tully wrote as an engaged citizen wishing to inspire political action. That accounts for certain crucial differences between the two (Asmis, 2005). Two things are particularly important for our purposes: first, the idea that the equilibrium between the three elements in Roman society is a *dynamic* harmony, not merely a static adjustment of the parts that Polybius described, depending upon the will of the parties involved and second, the related idea that the aim of

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realize intelligent goals by complementing and criticizing each other on the basis of reason; fourth for his emphasis upon the fact that church and state only thrive when their spheres are sharply distinguished and separated (Dante Alighieri, 1989).

politics, i.e., justice, involves *establishing and maintaining* that harmony. Thus originated the idea that consensus is not merely pre-existing agreement but “wise agreement” agreement that the engaged politician creates from dissonant opinions in the various segments of society: “Cicero equates ‘common agreement’ (*consensus*) with the ‘harmony’ (*concentus*, corresponding to Greek *harmonia*) that binds the social classes.” (Asmis, 2005, 406). Tully the philosopher was well aware that there were vast incommensurable differences between the interests and understanding of the social classes, so the challenge to Tully the politician-orator was to shape consensus out of those antagonisms. In effect, he realized that it is the main task of politicians in a republic to *persuade* the antagonistic elements in society that they indeed had common interests despite their deep differences. That presupposed that they clearly recognized that they attached different meanings to words in the political arena. For example, ‘democrats’ would argue that a society cannot be considered free unless its citizens are numerically equal but numerical equality obscures inequality of merit, i.e., intelligence, entrepreneurial skill etc., i.e., something that ‘aristocrats’ must find intolerable. Thus “equality” is normally understood in incommensurable and incompatible ways by the groups that vie with each other in the public sphere. The Aristotelian mixed constitution offers a way out of this dilemma by allowing for constructively channelling this conflict in the political arena. However, an essential aspect to that conflict is the very process of arguing publicly about the meaning of concepts that are the correlatives of interests. Consensus thus bears upon meanings as well as interests, upon language as much as economics. Moreover, as such consensus cannot be the starting point for political discussion but its must be its goal in republican society. Briefly, true politicians strive for attaining the common good across profound conflicts in society by shaping new ways of speaking about matters of common interest:

...a state is made harmonious by the common agreement (*consensu*) of the most dissimilar elements through the blending of the highest, lowest and intermediate orders (*ordines*) as if they were musical notes. What the musicians call harmony in a song is concord in the state, the highest and best bond of safety in a state, and it can in no way exist without justice. (Cicero, *De republica* quoted by Asmis, 2005, 405).

Although this idea of consensus does not receive mention by Machiavelli in his *Discourses*, it should; for conflict cannot be a constructive principle without it. The following chapter examines how we should understand the Ciceronian conception of consensus today. Let us now running the risk of oversimplification as we must, consider very briefly further the question of how Machiavelli’s Aristotelian republicanism was passed on to the American Founding Fathers.

The Aristotelian tradition of civic humanism as Polybius, Cicero and Machiavelli understood, i.e., separation of powers and the constructive channelling of social conflict, was very much part and parcel of the debates around the U.S. Constitution in the 1780s. James Harrington ‘s model of an ideal republic in his book *The Commonwealth of Oceana* written in 1656 translated

Machiavelli's thoughts about the constructive exploitation of conflict into a new language of constitutionalism. Harrington was the most enthusiastic and widely read student of Machiavelli's *Discourses* in 17<sup>th</sup> century England (Pocock, 1973, 80-147) and the literature which it spawned up to the time of the American Revolution in 1776 was a decided influence upon the Founding Fathers as they sought the most adequate form for the republic they were inventing. Harrington saw the collective interests of landed property, limited in size and organized as a militia in case of emergency, as the counterweight to royal absolutistic exercise of power and the army. Limited terms of office for all officials and rotation of office should guarantee maximum participation in public life. When the balance between the interests of landed property and central power was lost it could – and should -- be restored by 're-revolution', i.e., turning back to or restoring the natural equilibrium that is the pursuit of the common good. The fact that his concept of politics was clearly centrist can be demonstrated on the basis of the opposition to it on the part of both monarchists and extreme republicans, who found his ideas equally odious.

Neo-Harringtonians such as Henry Bolingbroke emphasized the importance of a party, "country party", in systematic opposing what they took to be arbitrary court power. Thus originated the idea of "the loyal opposition" as it would later be called, i.e., the idea that the function of the opposition in parliament is to provide scrutiny and rational criticism of the majority. Moreover, the Neo-Harringtonians linked Harrington's agrarian civic humanism to a "philosophy of custom" (Pocock, 1973, 133) based upon the idea that the common law was authoritative as the repository of perennial collective experience. None other than Friedrich von Hayek considered these developments in British constitutional thought in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century to be fullest embodiment ever of the ideal of Rule of Law (Hayek, 1960/2006, 146-153).

The emphasis that the American Founding Fathers, especially (but by no means only), John Adams, placed upon the Rule of Law is thus traceable directly back to Aristotle via Machiavelli via Harrington (see, for example, Stourzh, 1970, 56-66). Adams is particularly interesting in several respects. First, because he clearly and unequivocally endorsed the fundamental Aristotelian principle in politics, namely, that government should be the rule of laws and not men. Second, it was Adams that created the Constitution of Massachusetts, the first structured constitution with 1) its preamble on the functions of government, 2) its separations of powers: bi-cameral legislature, executive and judiciary as well as 3) its list of citizens' rights. The Massachusetts Constitution remains the oldest functioning constitution anywhere. The Harringtonian influence upon the convened lawmakers, it should be noted, was profound enough that a suggestion was mooted to rename Massachusetts the Commonwealth of Oceana (Commager, 1977, 200). Finally, Adams Constitution of Massachusetts became the model for the US Constitution when it became apparent that the Articles of Confederation were an inadequate basis for the union of the 13 colonies that it aspired to facilitate (interestingly because the Articles could not prevent default upon national

debts). Thus the concept of government “of the people, by the people, for the people” that Robert Schuman so admired in the United States – and so hoped to see realized in Europe-- is itself an essential element in a living tradition that reaches back to Aristotle.

## **Ecumenical Politics: Ethics and Reason in Pluralist Dialogue**

Few politicians, few thinkers even, have begun to consider the implications of a truly pluralistic democracy.

Sir Bernard Crick, 2005, 212

The challenge of politics is to conciliate conflicting interests in society and in doing so create harmony out of the dissonant voices in public life. That means nothing less than producing the concord and consensus which is the framework for pursuing politics as a rational activity in society. Briefly, it is the enormous challenge of creating a stable center in which political competition can take place. Conciliating interests and perspectives in society means legitimating them thereby creating a pluralistic society. Establishing a genuinely pluralistic order is the ultimate work of politics, the establishment of social peace, something that is easy to forget in the heat of political struggle about specific policies. It also means establishing legitimate authority on the basis of political consensus in society, i.e., precisely what the European Union lacks in the eyes of its critics.

Nevertheless, despite the truth in what Professor Crick alleges in the text cited above, in one sense it is not hard at all to imagine why politicians, political scientists or political philosophers fail to consider the implications of pluralistic democracy; for pluralism implies not simply tolerating opinions that dissent from our own but an effort – one that often seems positively superhuman -- to confront those opinions critically but nevertheless constructively. One main difficulty involved in the transition from grudging tolerance to wholehearted acceptance of the other in our society, as both Jacques Maritain and Bernard Crick well understood, is principally rooted in the inadequacies of the classical modern conception of politics as basically the struggle for wealth, power and prestige that we have inherited from the likes of Machiavelli, Hobbes, Rousseau -- and (and still, despite it all) Lenin -- that dominates western politics today. The politics of pluralistic democracy, on the other hand, entails somehow transforming confrontation into dialogue in situations where we encounter threatening opinions that are not simply different from ours but ostensibly loathsome and abominable. The ethical demand here is to be generous in a situation in which it takes an enormous effort merely to be courteous. We need only call to mind the suspicion and distrust that characterizes opposing parties involved in debates about, say, the legality of abortion as they approach each other if we need an example here. The parties involved can scarcely believe that the other is acting in good faith. Debates in Europe today about the integration of religious or ethnic migrants such as Muslims or Roma in western Europe all too frequently evoke a similar atmosphere of hostility. There is no need to labor the point: practicing pluralism in politics conscientiously means extending ourselves morally to the breaking point. Yet – and that is Sir Bernard's point – it is absolutely required of us if we are to be practicing democrats. Practicing pluralist politics brings

us to the brink of tragedy; for entering into dialogue puts us at least potentially in a dangerous situation. In seeking reconciliation either we compromise our own principles by giving in to unreasonable demands as we attempt to discover grounds for political compromise or we embitter the foe – further confirming his hostility -- by not meeting him half way. Either way we lose. Little wonder that the parties to such debates are reluctant to seek common ground, it is simply too dangerous. It is precisely this sort of superhuman requirement within politics that convinced Jacques Maritain that only religious faith in the form of love of our neighbor can fully justify political action in such circumstances. On the other hand, in a modern society where the practice of pluralism is, for whatever reason, neglected, participation in politics is restricted and the development of the citizen's identity restricted with it. Lacking such resources to facilitate dialogue, the political world becomes a tragic sphere. The Anglo-German sociologist Sir Ralf Dahrendorf who was also a liberal politician and a confirmed, if skeptical, European (Dahrendorf, 1979) has rightly insisted that profound conflict has a destructive—and self-destructive—potential that can only be diminished by transmuting it into political dialogue: “Conflict keeps societies open to change and prevents dogmatization of error. Aversion to conflict is a basic trait of authoritarian political thought” (Dahrendorf, 1967, 184) and “the rationality of the liberal attitude to conflict comes ultimately from the fact that it alone does justice to the creativity of social antagonisms as motive forces of change...Wherever conflicts are suppressed as awkward obstacles to arbitrary rule, or declared abolished once and for all, these fallacies produce unexpected and uncontrollable responses of the suppressed forces” (Dahrendorf, 1967, 139-40). Acknowledging deep political differences is the first step to channelling conflict such that the irrational politics of fear and force are transformed into a rational politics of persuasion and consensus. It is a matter of talking to people with radically different views from our own in the hope of establishing good will on both sides of our differences. Little wonder that there is such widespread despair of true, pluralist politics in the modern world.

One of the rare thinkers sensitive to exactly the considerations that prompted Professor Crick's pained reflections on the state of western democracy was the American Jesuit political philosopher and human rights advocate, John Courtney Murray. In 1960 Murray had already written poignantly concerning modern political culture (in anticipation of the so-called post-modern movement in philosophy -- and, it must be added, with a depth foreign to it):

...perhaps the ultimate tendency of the pluralisms created by the era of modernity is felt...rather in the realm of affectivity than in the realm of reason as such. The fact today is not simply that we hold different views but that we have become different types of men, with different styles of interior life. We are therefore uneasy in each others presence. We are not, in fact, present to one another; we are absent from one another. That is, I am not transparent to the other, nor he to me; our mutual experience is that of an opaqueness. And this

mutual opaqueness is the root of an hostility that is overcome only with an effort, if at all (Murray, 1964, 130).

Like Bernard Crick, he considered that his contemporaries were actually alienated from politics, which has to be a Hobbsean “war of all against all” in those circumstances; like Jacques Maritain, he was convinced that any adequate response to the question of restoring transparency to social and political relationships within democratic society, was, in the end, a moral challenge and a philosophical conundrum as well as a political *impasse*. Thinking about the implications of a genuinely pluralistic democracy, as Jacques Maritain and Bernard Crick would, is, indeed, a matter of thinking about the relationship between ethics and politics as matters of practical rationality, i.e., as incorporated in concrete actions in aid of harmonizing deep-seated conflicts within society and not merely as theoretical puzzles. Moreover, since ethics and politics are opposite poles in human life, the antipodes within human action in the tradition from Machiavelli & Co., that tradition lack the resources for even posing the problem. It is one of the strengths of the Aristotelian tradition, whose representative John Courtney Murray was, that ethics and politics complement one another in such a way that the ethical challenge to restore the other’s lost transparency is resoundingly affirmed as an essential element in “true politics”.

Jacques Maritain had a clear sense that Aristotelianism could take us about as far as reason can go in the pursuit of pluralism and social dialogue. However, given the moral onus that modern politics brings with it, that was not quite far enough. Thus, Maritain was no less adamant in insisting that the Christian message commanding love of neighbor provided a solid foundation in the individual’s character for taking the step into dialogue across large-scale political differences that rightly appears superhuman from the point of reason alone. He clearly understood the complementarity between ethico-political demands and religious belief but he also had a equally sharp eye for making the crucial distinction between the two spheres of politics and Christianity, “the things that are Caesar’s and the things that are God’s.” For all that, he had little sense of the concrete challenges that the everyday politics of pluralistic practice present. That required another equally religious and philosophical but differently focussed political sensibility. John Courtney Murray also devoted his life’s work to the project of concretely understanding the opaqueness of human relationships typical of life in modern society and the enormous ethico-political challenge of restoring transparency to political relationships in our world. Whereas Maritain approached the problems of renewing politics exclusively from the point of view of a Christian philosopher; Murray’s perspective added a crucial *juridical* dimension to Maritain’s project which emphasized thoroughly grasping the role of *rational argument in legal space* as the key to implementing pluralism in a democratic society. His penetrating reflections upon the nature of communication across “divergent and incompatible” religious perspectives (again a phrase reminiscent of Thomas Kuhn’s discussion of what occurs when paradigms clash, Kuhn, 1962) insures his reflections remain of vital importance in re-

thinking the foundations of European Christian Democracy today. (Although his defence of pluralism does not explicitly address problems that nationality and ethnicity pose within a pluralistic society, the very depth of his account of the complexities of the rhetoric of pluralist communication in religious issues insures that his views are no less relevant in those contexts and obviously so.)

It will doubtless strike many European Christian Democrats as curious that an exploration of the meaning of Christian Democracy today would place such stress upon an American theologian, who was, in fact a younger contemporary of Robert Schuman and Jacques Maritain and has been dead for nearly fifty years. However, we have already seen that both Robert Schuman and Jacques Maritain looked to the American political tradition in support of their efforts to put a genuinely democratic Christian political movement onto its feet in Europe after World War II. The religious origins of American democracy with its stress upon the freedom of religion as well as the importance of religion in secular society was a vital clue for reforming European politics, indeed, of creating a truly European political entity to Schuman and Maritain, and nobody understood the resources for developing Christian politics in the kind of framework that American political system provides better than Murray – nor has anyone argued the case for it more stringently and lucidly right down to today.

This is all the more poignant when we consider that the United States, i.e., American public space as it were, was by and large a hostile environment for Catholics before John Kennedy's election in 1960, which wrought a sea change in the status of Catholics in that country. To radical "nativist" Americans, i.e., white Anglo-Saxon Protestant descendants of the Founding Fathers, Catholics were a threat to the American way of life that might be compared to the threat that Muslims seem to present to many Europeans today: an organized group of immigrants whose first loyalties were determined by what is seemingly an irrational religious commitment to values that were basically foreign and un-American, to free expression, to the separation of church and state and, ultimately, to Mom's Apple Pie. We forget at our peril, for example, that in 1930 American "nativists" tied to scare voters against voting for the first Catholic presidential candidate, the Democrat Al Smith, on the basis of absurd allegations (too numerous to list here; for a sense of what was falsely and absurdly claimed about Smith see <http://www.reformation.org/1928-presidential-election.html>) such as the idea that he would build a tunnel to Rome so that he could be in direct contact with the Pope.

Morality, it is said, teaches by precept and example. In this case John Kennedy provided a convincing example of a politician who could combine Catholic faith with American patriotism in way that simply disarmed skeptics in the political arena; whereas John Courtney Murray's philosophical acumen and rhetorical brilliance provided equally persuasive precepts in the public arena of political philosophy. Along with Walter Lippmann and other public intellectuals of the Cold War era Murray sought to develop a "public philosophy" for the United States, i.e., to martial tried and true ethical insight

drawn from public debate between the “wise” in aid of reforming American political life along the pluralistic lines stipulated in the U.S. Constitution. The “wise” are not defined on the basis of their political and religious commitments but as intelligent, rational citizens. They are people -- students, writers, clergy, financiers, journalists, politicians, businessmen, professors or other specialists etc-- 1) with open minds prepared to discuss all sorts of issues frankly, 2) who assess positions including their own rationally upon the basis of evidence and criteria and 3) are capable of representing their position effectively in public debate (Hooper, 1986, 117). When such persons enter debate genuine pluralism emerges within the unity of an orderly conversation. Their critical dialogue is a public prudential process that aims at exposing ideological threats lurking within the language of the debate. Appeal to the “wise” in public debate is explicitly made in the light of Tocqueville’s admonitions about the dangers of “tyranny of the majority” – today’s populism -- in a democratic society. In that context the not uncontroversial John Courtney Murray became arguably the foremost advocate of religious freedom of his time perhaps best known for his role in producing the Second Vatican Council’s declaration on religious freedom, *Dignitatis humanae personae* (Hooper, 1986, pp. 123-124).

With respect to religious pluralism, Murray argued that it was the very separation of church and state in the United States that made it a suitable home in the fullest sense for Catholics. His “Catholic” reflections on the American Proposition proceed from the consideration that the idea that the American Proposition, i.e., the idea that all men are created equal, proclaims, at once, is philosophically, a true proposition and, politically, a project to create a new form of society in which all religions would have an equal right to practice protected by the state. The great migrations to the United States in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought with them large Catholic and Jewish minorities, who changed America’s religious face and the meaning of pluralism. At the time when Murray wrote the essays that became his main work, *We Hold These Truths*, the idea that the rights of Catholics (and Jews) to equality before the law was still a matter that had to be argued for. In the eyes of American “nativists” they were a threat to American unity. Murray’s response was that American unity is a pluralist unity, a unity-in-plurality. His task was to articulate what could be meant by the idea of pluralistic unity

The continuing importance of Murray’s work lies precisely in the emphasis he puts upon the idea that pluralism means that “divergent and incompatible” ideas can exist with regard to religious questions in the same community and what follows from it. Those divergences and incompatibilities imply that a pluralistic community has to be capable of living with disagreement and dissent in religious matters. How can such differences co-exist within the same community in such a way that they do not tear at its very fabric? Murray’s response was that “objectivity” must emerge from public debate itself. How can that happen?

The answer is that they have to be “civilized” in precisely the sense that we have seen Sir Bernard Crick employing the term; i.e., by becoming

part of the very political fabric of the community. Like Maritain, Murray saw his age as an age of civil war both literally and figuratively. Literally and figuratively communities are divided against themselves in mortal conflict. The challenge was – and remains -- to transform that conflict from something destructive into something constructive as Ralf Dahrendorf insists. To insist that religious conflicts be “civilized”, means that they should pass from a state of cultural guerrilla warfare into one of courteous, if vivid, public dialogue. Only there could they be channelled into something positive: out of a shouting match a conversation should emerge. The state of cultural civil war is one of barbarism in which force and fear rule the roost. There is nothing remotely resembling dialogue and social agents behave as if they were solipsists. Above all there is no common universe of discourse, no common language. All attempts at discussion collapse in the face of disagreements about the meaning of key terms. “Truth,” “freedom,” “justice,” “order,” “law,” “authority,” “power,” “knowledge,” “certainty,” “unity,” “morality” and ultimately “man” – indeed, the greater part of our moral and political vocabulary itself -- all become essentially contested (see below), i.e., the subject of unending disagreement. Initial mistrust is thus amplified on the basis of mutual misunderstandings. Little wonder human beings involved in such intense conflicts become entirely opaque to one another. The challenge, then, is to make them transparent to one another, i.e., “civilize” that shouting match on the basis of reason and logic. This has to begin as an effort of the will but the project remains nevertheless entirely rational. You might call it the will to reason in strife-ridden situations. The very heat of debate obscures that fact that sometimes there are good reasons why our differences are irreconcilable. Bitter conflict does not always have to be rooted in personal or group prejudice or high flying emotions. They can have ‘objective’ grounds. However, if there can be ‘objective’ grounds for the intransigencies typical of such hostilities, nothing will be more important to pluralist politics than to discover them. Here it is necessary to introduce an idea that is not found in Murray explicitly but is implicit in and absolutely central to his concept of citizenship.

It is the service of the English philosopher, W. B. Gallie to have provided criteria for identifying situations in which the very concepts that lie at the basis of our controversies are themselves subject to being construed in radically different ways *legitimately*. Gallie’s work on “essentially contested concepts” thus complements Murray in an indispensable way at exactly at the crucial point in establishing the foundations of genuinely pluralist discourse. Gallie coined the phrase “essentially contested concept” to describe the sort of subjects that involve in arguments that are irresolvable on the basis of reasoning alone. His aim was to demonstrate that such heated, frustrating confrontations about “art” -- but also interestingly “democracy” and “Christianity” (cf. Murray’s list above) -- do not, for all that, always have to be irrational (Gallie, 1955-6). The mere fact that our discussions of such essentially contested concepts are as irresolvable as they are heated does not necessarily imply that one or both of the parties to the debate in question are acting in

bad faith; nor is it necessarily the case that our emotions have got the best of us. In short, Gallie set out to show us that there are circumstances under which such disagreements are legitimate. To understand the nature of essentially contested concepts is to understand the conceptual politics of everyday life and thus a central element in any effort to produce a public philosophy to counter the grotesque oversimplifications of populist demagogues. What are essentially contested concepts? When do we find ourselves endlessly arguing with each other heatedly but legitimately?

Briefly, essentially contested concepts are complex concepts designating achievements, which can be assessed differently because the very complexity of the concept permits it to be construed in different ways legitimately – e.g. in art or in politics the amount of stress that you place upon the concept of “representation” (which is obviously very different in the two spheres) will determine how you evaluate specific paintings or movements. Moreover it is crucial that there are new (potentially unlimited) ways of being democratic or producing art; whereas there are no new ways of being a triangle in Euclidean geometry. In addition, the parties to the debate recognize that here are some common authorities on the subject. Everybody who rationally argues about democracy recognizes that such authorities as Locke, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Jefferson and Mill cannot be simply capriciously dismissed however one might rank them. Above all, the parties to the debate believe that it is in principle possible to convince their opponents of the truth of their claims on the basis of arguments without recourse to force. This is where the ecumenical moment in rational behavior enters into the picture: it since my reasons are potentially convincing, I must remain committed to advancing them; indeed, I have to begin to examine what might count as convincing the hitherto opaque other. Carrying this strategy out logically involves learning about the other in ways that eventually can make him transparent to me. It is crucial that for the concept to be essentially contested the parties involved must be committed to dialogue, which is to say that they must assume an ecumenical attitude of genuine, as opposed to grudging, tolerance towards one another.

Examining the criteria for "essential contestability" (see fig. 4 for a complete list) a bit more closely we can obtain a further insight into the moral basis of rational politics in a complex modern social setting. It is crucial there are no rational discussions of contested concepts unless everybody involved really believes, despite it all, that the contested matter can be resolved in principle on the basis of evidence and persuasion. That insures that the discussion has a value of its own; it is in the interests of all, i.e., in the common good, to pursue objectivity even though the goal of convincing our opponent seems virtually unattainable – a remarkably uncomfortable, frustrating, situation. The very pursuit of that goal in the face of conceptual obstacles creates mutual trust that becomes self-generating over time. Realistic and reliable consensus emerges as we compare the things we do agree about with what we do not.

Consensus, then, de-barbarizes politics as we learn to agree to disagree with others in a constructive way while we seek ways to attain genuine solutions to seemingly intractable problems. It is based upon the conviction that rational persuasion is not out of place even where there is deep-seated disagreement. We can, for example, reach agreement about the nature of argument, the kinds of evidence that is relevant to the case in question, etc. With some effort we can attain a certain consensus about the procedures of arguing that facilitate further discussion generally. Substantive consensus in the sense of agreement about the very nature and scope of the debate around a given topic, let's say, "power" has to be reached from within the real disagreements surrounding it; the framework for discussion itself is emphatically not a "methodological" presupposition or "given" in any political discussion whatsoever as is sometimes alleged. If we are able to agree to disagree, recognizing our differences can become a source of strength rather than weakness. This can be explained on the basis of the fact that conflict is a strong, if negative, bond between people because it, paradoxically, involves a clear form of recognition; whereas mere tolerance is a positive but weak bond because it is a vague form of recognition. The idea behind accepting difference of opinion is to transform the negative strength of the bonds of conflict into a positive sense of respect in the face of real differences vehemently but honestly asserted in public debates.

Understanding that profound disagreements may be of this character, combined with sensitivity to the practical logic of the other's position (i.e., the assumptions, evidence and reasoning principles appealed to) puts us into a position where it is possible 'agree to disagree', i.e., pursue the argument further where that is possible because we are each decent human beings deserving to be treated as such. If we cannot do so, we shall find ourselves in a conflict-ridden situation, which may become a spiral of destruction and self-destruction precisely because there is no foreseeable end to the conflict. Agreeing to disagree entails transforming the tone of our disagreement from one of mere confrontation to one of respectful confrontation. From that point forward the rhetoric of the discussion becomes as important as its logic. That creative compromise with respect to the style of argumentation in turn contains the first promise (but only that, it must be emphasized) of substantive reconciliation, which it by no means guarantees but at least ceases to rule out.

Far from being an ideal apart from political reality, such consensus has to be reached if we are ever to talk of pluralistic politics at all. Pluralistic consensus constitutes democratic politics. In the classical tradition of western political philosophy from Aristotle to Sir Bernard Crick, consensus must be reached in the face of disagreement, consensus is attained not at the moment that agreement is reached but at the moment when the partners in discourse realize that they disagree in good faith. Then it is possible to agree to disagree and thereby to maintain a polite or civil relationship to one another even in the face of heated discussion. Aristotelian consensus reigns in public debates when the disagreeing parties treat each other with respect despite their

differences. We can continue to discuss our views conscious of each other's disagreement but sensitive to the difficulties involved in reaching agreement. The civility involved in this sense of consensus is implicit in the British idea of the "loyal opposition" in parliament, whose function it is to remind the ruling majority that it is in fact responsible for the whole of society and not only specific interest groups. Consensus is thus the courteous and respectful disagreement upon which makes society civil and democratic institutions democratic.

Why should people involved in deep conflicts want to take their opponents seriously? The only answer is that such conflicts are not only destructive but potentially self destructive. Survival depends upon social peace, which is the basic work of justice. The good of social peace provides the motivation to pass from a state of barbarous chaos to civilized conversation. The fact that human beings living in proximity to one another in fact have certain common concerns independently of what they think of each other, i.e., despite conflicting interests, deep-seated prejudices etc. simply because they are members of the human species plays a crucial role here. However many things they may disagree about, there are always things that people can discuss (perhaps not many) if they want to.

From this sketch it is easy to see that the opponents of pluralism and the enemies of civil society are dissimulation, hypocrisy, manipulation and intimidation. Con-sensus is literally a "feeling together" which entails a conspiracy, a "breathing together", despite differences, for the public good, which becomes a matter pursuing a common purpose despite political differences with respect to the exercise of public power. It is what turns raw power into legitimate authority. It is the reasonable way of dealing with fundamental differences because it "civilizes" conflict rather than resorting to force. Thus consensus is neither a matter of majority opinion, nor public compromise but a process of collective mutual criticism. To participate effectively in the debate it is necessary to articulate own position but also to be able to understand how our position relates to the perspective of our opponents, whose grounds for and principles of assertion are of as much importance to the debate as the assertions we question.

To sum up: pluralistic consensus, begins at the point where we have become ecumenical enough to realize that it is sensible, indeed, wise, to enter into civil conversation with one another. However difficult and restricted that conversation may be, it contains the germs of "civil society" within it: courteous association on the basis of some common interest or other. The generous ecumenical attitude facilitates the effort to reach agreement about how to understand and ultimately to produce some kind of regulations with respect to some pressing common concern, thereby establishing a role for argument and law in their affairs. Nature has predisposed us to a certain minimal consensus in the living of life simply because we are the sorts of animals that we are. That common element can become the basis, the breeding ground as it were, for the sort of moral consensus that breathes life into democratic institutions. Like Jacques Maritain, Murray takes it to be the

political task of Christianity precisely to civilize our intelligence by refusing to allow us to forget that, despite our profound political differences, our opponents are also human beings worthy of respect as such, however difficult it might in fact be to render them that respect. It is the first step in making us transparent to each other again, to put us at ease with one another such that we are not suspicious about 'politics' and the dangers of being manipulated by that opaque other. The success of at least some ecumenical efforts to produce mutual understanding across serious religious differences indicates that such rapprochement is clearly possible. It remains a reminder of what we can do when we really want to reach each other across great political divides. Creating consensus in this sense is the crucial move in re-vitalizing both the political center of society and center of our political lives. For a society whose members have been hitherto opaque to each other the transparency that emerges in creating consensus is, in fact, the realization of a common good of a political community.

### Figure 3

#### **The Bearers of the Public Philosophy: “The Wise”:**

Intelligent citizens who reflect upon political practice on the basis of collective moral experience.

They are notably people:

- 1) with open minds prepared to discuss all sorts of issues frankly,
- 2) who assess positions including their own rationally upon the basis of evidence and criteria

and

- 3) are capable of representing and defending their political view vigorously and effectively in public debate

## Figure 4

### The Criteria for Essential Contestability

Essentially contested concepts have seven characteristics:

1. They are *appraisive*, not merely descriptive concepts: they refer to *achievements*. So "work of art", not "weight 5 kilo."

2. They are *complex* concepts. So "democracy", which contains a reference to further concepts such as equality, representation, freedom, not simple like "blue".

3. The achievement that the concept represents is a result of *the order of the parts*. So democracy refers not simply indiscriminately to a equality, freedom, and representation, but to a specific relation between a specific combination of these elements.

4. The order that the confers the character of achievement upon the concept *can be described differently*. So, freedom or equality (less frequently representation) can be taken to be the main element in the definition of democracy, depending upon whether one is a liberal democrat or a social democrat.

5. Such concepts are "*open-textured*": there are new (potentially unlimited) ways of being democratic; whereas there are no new ways of being a triangle in Euclidean geometry.

6. All of the parties in the debate *recognize some common authorities* on the subject. Everybody who rationally argues about democracy recognizes that such authorities as Locke, Mill, Jefferson and Rousseau have to be taken seriously and cannot be simply capriciously dismissed however one might rank them.

7. All of the parties to the debate *believe that it is in principle possible to convince their opponents of the truth of their claims on the basis of arguments* and not force. All parties involved must be committed to dialogue.

## **Beyond the ‘Democracy Deficit’: A European Common Good?**

...in our day the common good has decidedly ceased to be merely the common good of a nation and has not yet succeeded in constituting itself as the common good of the civilized community but that is exactly what the term should mean... the common good of civilized society as a whole.

Maritain, 1947, 48

...the shared public goods of the modern nation-state are not the common goods of a genuine nation-wide community and, when the nation-state masquerades as the guardian of such a common good, the outcome is bound to be either ludicrous or disastrous or both

MacIntyre, 1999, 132

this common good is itself the process of practical reconciliation of the interests of the various...aggregates or groups which compose a state; it is not some external and intangible spiritual adhesive or some objective ‘general will’ or ‘public interest’....The moral consensus of a free state is not something mysteriously prior to or above politics: it is the activity (the civilizing activity) of politics itself.”

Crick, 2005, 9

It follows from the views presented in the last two chapters that there is – or ought to be – something like the European common good as Jacques Maritain suggests in the sanguine text above. Aristotle’s “true politics” is nothing other than a politics oriented towards the common good which is clearly present in his discussion even if it is not discussed explicitly, let alone defined. For there to be true politics at all individuals must recognize the wisdom involved in sacrificing self-interest or group interest to the higher good of constituting a robust political community. Moreover, our discussion of pluralism has been in aid of elucidating what is involved morally and intellectually in the day-to-day confrontations that the practice of true politics (i.e., the pursuit of the common good) brings with it, again without discussing the topic explicitly. It is necessary to round off this discussion of re-vitalizing the center of European politics with an explicit discussion of what the common good can mean in Europe today. The divergent views presented in the three texts above are a good point of departure for discussing this ticklish subject because they remind us 1) of the hopes enshrined in the very notion of the common good and the concomitant temptation to extend it into the international sphere, 2) of the difficulties involved speaking about the common good on national, let alone an international, scale (i.e., as a matter of creating a community with the sort of emotional cohesion frequently associated naïvely with pre-industrial society) and 3) that there is, nevertheless, an important sense in which the common good is constituted with the very rational procedures that the activity of true politics itself entail. Grasping the truth in each of these very different

texts as it qualifies that of the others will round out our discussion of what the values that lie at the basis of the Christian Democratic conception of politics and also serve as a bridge for determining how those values should come into play in coping with the democracy deficit widely perceived in the European Union today.

The texts cited by Maritain and MacIntyre indicate that, at the very least, we seem to encounter a paradox when we talk about the European common good. There can be little doubt that Jacques Maritain's belief that the common good is something that can transcend national boundaries foreshadows a vision of Europe and a putative organization like the European Union might become. From that point of view the very existence of the European Union is an index that, at the very least, the most primitive forms of collective egoism have been overcome in Europe even if they are far from being extinguished. Alasdair MacIntyre soberingly insists, on the contrary, that the national state (like that other form of institutionalized Machiavellianism the market economy) is "so structured as to subvert and undermine the politics of local community (MacIntyre, 1998) 252)", i.e., the primary locus of our understanding of the common good in the first place. Thus he casts doubt upon our ability of practice generosity (or "the virtues of acknowledged dependence" as he terms them, MacIntyre, 1999, 119-128 *et passim*) on a national scale, let alone on the supranational scale, which Maritain has suggested is implicit in the very notion of the common good itself. Yet, on Crick's view, which can be construed as a kind of riposte to MacIntyre, wherever true politics is practiced a common good is realized in its very reasoning procedures. Is this possible within the European Union? Is it at all plausible that pluralistic moral consensus could come into being in the European Union? In order to be able to tackle these questions it is necessary to begin by reflecting upon what may be termed the common sphere that is part and parcel of collective human activity as such.

A common good presupposes common activity. Common action arises from the collective resolve to realize a concrete project. That aim binds individuals to each other in the course of achieving their common goal. Each participant contributes to achieving that aim in his or her own specific way. Consider the case of producing a play professionally (cf. Janik, 2005, 51-83). In order for the effort to succeed in that most labile of art forms, actors must learn to concentrate together to re-inact the drama in the author's text on the stage. That requires the assistance of a director and a directorial staff of assistants and dramaturge as well as a group of technicians to support the performance, which cannot take place without a theater and a staff to sell tickets, advertise the play, clean the house etc. Producing a play successfully together means participating in a common effort, in which all their specific competences are employed to attain a goal that none of them alone could achieve. However, there must be a clear chain of command and a relatively strict discipline for the play to be a success. The personal interests and inclinations of the actors (and, indeed, everyone else involved) have to be subordinated to the aim of realizing the text on the stage. The more complex

activity is, the more complex the organization must be. Coping with such complexity on the stage requires two kinds of authority: one in the form of a person, who sees that the job gets done properly, in this case the director, and another in the form of criteria or standards to measure how well the goal has been achieved. The 'rights' of the participants in the project are, therefore, subordinate to achieving the goal of the common action. Yet, it is necessary to emphasize that the existence of authority in the theater is entirely compatible with mutual criticism on the part of the whole ensemble. Contracts and the rights and privileges that they bring with them play an essential role in organizing the project but it succeeds or fails on the basis of the common effort involved. Success is not merely something additive; it is greater than the sum of its parts and the individual good of the various participants melts into the common good, as it does, say, in the example of producing a play professionally; yet, there is no opposition between the individual goods and the common good in such an enterprise. In addition, succeeding in such a common undertaking confers a certain camaraderie, an identity as it were, on the participants; a community emerges when things go well (which is not to say that said camaraderie is without its tensions and problems).

The common good that is part and parcel of a common activity like producing a play with artistic merit in which contracts play a crucial but subsidiary role should be contrasted with the *merely* contractual partnership between a financier and an industrialist, who draw up a contract according to which the financier invests a certain sum in the industrialist's enterprise with the promise of a fixed rate of return in his investment. Here we find a common material interest but there is no common action; the two do not *do* anything together (Simon, 1980, 30); so, there is no common good involved. Participating in a common project, doing something together in the way that our theatrical team does, creates a communal consciousness that is essentially different from a legal partnership. In the context of the partnership, either the terms of the contract have been met or they have not. For the most part this is a clear cut issue. There is no question of executing one's legal obligations under a contract *well or not* as there are, say, in the theater or the operating room of a hospital. There are no standards of excellence as there are with respect to actions, such as, say, surgical operations, performed together by a team. These latter actions are practices that carry merit with them both technically and morally.

In any co-operative venture where actions are performed together, playing football, building houses, performing experiments, running a restaurant, producing a play on the stage, there must be some sort of agreed upon division of labor and practical rules of organization. Working together thus requires accepting common authorities and standards (i.e., recognizing a common tradition) as well as developing a common way of seeing and judging the myriad situations that arise as we perform the action relevant to our part of the project. In effect, the common practice involves a common discipline and thus becomes a scene of learning where a specific form of knowledge, i.e., skill, is acquired and exercised. To the extent that the knowledge involved is

well-employed we can speak of the activity involving virtue in Aristotle's sense. Successful actions also require certain moral qualities on the part of the agents who perform them. Solidarity and mutual pleasure in performing the specified tasks grows as a genuine community of agents proud of its accomplishments comes into existence.

It will be clear from this sketch of communal enterprise as such that there will be as many common goods as there are forms of collective human activity to which excellence attaches. Moreover, what is crucial about the ensemble of phenomena that can be grouped under this rubric is that the term "common good" does not refer to a class with a set of necessary and sufficient defining characteristics but to a group whose members are related to each other more loosely on the basis of analogies of different sorts. Further, the kinds of community that come into existence upon the basis of working towards a common goal, although they are dependent upon shared competences and values, are not bound together by ties of the same intensity. In any case, it should be clear from above 1) the common activity has *ipso facto* a certain immanently normative character and 2) the immanence involved is something natural to human action as such. Thus it is possible to speak of "common" law and "natural" law in a concrete manner that is neither chauvinistic nor philosophically partisan. The crucial point here is that when common law and natural law, which are essential to any discussion of democracy in the Christian Democratic tradition stemming from Robert Schuman and Jacques Maritain, are presented in this way it becomes clear that they are elements in the natural history of human beings, whose reality and importance is not merely a matter of ideology but intrinsic to human action itself. Where does that leave us with respect to the European Union?

From the point of view of a Jacques Maritain Europe is a half-finished project precisely because it has made such scant progress in realizing the common good. That perspective on Europe holds up the scarcely attainable ideal of the complete community (*societas perfecta*) in which a genuine communication (stress is placed upon the link between community and communicability) between transparent individuals (to employ Murray's term) against the opaqueness of European identity as it is today. From the point of view of an Alasdair MacIntyre it is too much to expect from the sort of imperfect community that Europe (or indeed its national states, which is the level at MacIntyre's arguments are developed) this is not particularly strange. We tend to see our problematic situation more bleakly than it actually is because with Maritain we project an either/or onto Europe: either we realize community in the sense of communicability and transparency or we must content ourselves with the social values of gangsters (Maritain, 1947, 47); whereas both tend to obscure our actual situation in a very imperfect community, which is, for all that, still a community. From the point of view of a Bernard Crick (which ends up in extremely close proximity to MacIntyre's final view of the matter, MacIntyre, 1999, 140-146) moral consensus and therefore the common good for Europe might emerge on the basis "creative compromise" based upon procedural values such as "respect for reasoning."

“respect for truth,” “toleration,” “fairness,” and “freedom” that themselves do not constitute a substantive political doctrine or set of policies but “are the presuppositions of any genuine political education and of *all* doctrines that are political...” (Crick, 2005, 178).

With that we return to our point of departure, namely, the question of what a vital center for European politics might be. The composite picture of the actual state of affairs is that of a labile community, whose vitality is in fact dependent upon developing vigorous but rigorous dialogue about policies and priorities across both ‘horizontal’, i.e., traditional right-left, polarities surrounding such issues as immigration and multiculturalism today as well as ‘vertical’ ones, i.e., tensions between citizens and the very politicians that they elect that arise from the allegations that elected officials in Europe fail to represent their constituents. These vertical tensions are particularly significant in Europe today for lots of reasons, not least because they deprive politicians of their crucial roles as political educators – we forget at our peril that democracy is a political form of behavior that has to be learned for the sake of which we need teachers. Thus a crucial step is realizing the procedural values connected to a European common good will consist in diminishing the impact of those tensions and thereby re-invigorating the European common work.

The increasingly low participation in European Union elections (1979 = 63%; 2009 = 43%) are one index that this is the case. They are indicative of a crisis in public morale arising from a leadership vacuum in Europe. It is not that Europe lacks leaders, but that they are insufficiently anchored to their political constituents to inspire confidence in the European project that they allegedly represent; which has lost still more credibility in the eyes of many Europeans as a consequence of the financial crisis, the Greek bail-out etc. Thus the question about leadership has as much to do with its institutionalized form, i.e., the leadership function, in Europe as it does with leaders. No small part of the current European crisis of democratic practice is to be found in a series of radical transformations of political life that have changed the meaning of *representation* in politics. The emergence of unelected finance and regulatory agencies (Vibert, 2007, 57-58), increasing recourse to direct democracy in the form of binding referenda (*The Economist*, 19.12.09, 73-74) as well as the changing role of traditional political ideologies (Roger, 2007), have circumscribed the traditional roles of the principal European parties and transformed them into organizations that their own traditional constituents often simply fail to recognize. How often do we hear the lament, “what our representatives say to us and what they say in Brussels are completely different things?” In the worst of cases perceptible tendencies to self-encapsulation, self-gratification and self-sufficiency within national parties (Coman & La Croix, 2007, 10-13) have emerged to alienate their traditional constituents with Europe paying the price. The people’s parties, right-center and left-center, Christian Democrats and Social Democrats, are increasingly perceived to be merely representing their own party interests, i.e., staying in power at all costs. This was already beginning to be grasped by political scientists 50 years ago but only really became visible with the fall of

communism (Mair, 2005) Thus many Europeans think that if there is no more reason to vote for my traditional national party, how can I possibly take European politics, which is based upon national politics, seriously? Politics at the national level seems increasingly remote from the lives of individual citizens and increasingly incapable of responding to their needs and super-national politics a-fortiori even less so. Voters are fed up with politics as usual and have protested against it by supporting radical movements on the right and the left – or by not voting at all. For example, the European parliament is much too far removed from the citizens it represents: “The European Parliament is the ‘big failure’ of the European project, says one senior European Union official. ‘Its quite successful as an institution, but doesn’t do what a parliament is supposed to do, which is to connect the people to the European Union.’” (*The Economist*, 10.10, 2009, 26). There is simply too little sense that normal citizens are involved in anything like a common project in Europe today.

Most accounts of the tensions within the tradition of democratic thinking right and left focus upon two elements defining democratic societies. Most debates about western democracy tend to play off freedom against equality or vice versa. It is a strength of Professor Crick’s focus upon the absolute centrality of political activity in itself that the tension between them becomes constitutive of genuine democracy in the sense of conferring a democratic spirit upon democratic institutions. However, the focus upon political activity as such also enables him to hone in upon the much neglected third defining characteristic of a democratic society: *representation*, which is the key to participation in public life in large-scale democratic communities (Gallie, 1955, 184-185). In modern democracies this is largely a function mediated by political parties. Precisely because it is not so frequently the case that democratic theorists have considered the importance of participation in public life, i.e., the question of representation in the constitution of democratic government, it is refreshing to find Professor Crick asserting, “...the most usual cause of failing to govern is simply not knowing what the governed want or will settle for, through not giving them adequate representation (Crick, 2005, 90).” The fact that the democracy deficit in the European Union has been ascribed to just that lack of adequate representation leaving us with “democracy without a demos” (Mair, 2005) is a further reminder that Crick’s perspective on the primacy of politics within democracy is of crucial importance for understanding Europe today and for plotting its future. Without participation there is no democracy; there is plenty of evidence that Europeans’ discontents with the governance of Brussels begins there. The state of the European economy in the wake of the catastrophes that the finance crisis has brought with it can always have a strongly negative impact upon that but, for all that, economic upswings can not do much to change the situation in a positive direction because the problem is basically political. Taking Aristotle on politics along the lines suggested above seriously just might make a difference.

If the European Union itself is Europe's common project, why should we not speak of a European common good as the goal of that project? Nobody would allege that it is easy to realize that project but that cannot be an objection to making the effort. If that project is realized, as it is, *in ovo* as it were, it certainly would seem to be legitimate to speak of a European common good as Jacques Maritain suggested. Creating a genuine community of interest – and thus a common identity -- out of the disparate economic, political and cultural interests of the Union's members, on the basis of ideas advanced in earlier chapters, means that European citizens must perceive themselves as participating in politics together at a super-national level. This seems entirely possible, if extraordinarily difficult to achieve. Nevertheless, we ignore Alasdair MacIntyre's warning at our peril: the very idea of the common good resists being employed even at the national level. Normally, what we understand under the common good is something connected with well-being with relatively small communities. For example, the kind of emotionally closely-knit group that emerges from a common practice at a local level, say, the sort of unconditional, "altruistic" mutual bonds and support that we find within families, neighborhoods or crafts – these are the our primary referents for understanding the idea of the common good in the first place. A European common good is going to be a very different thing from the common good, say, of a guild of watch makers, a theater company, an operating team in a hospital or an association for assisting the blind – so much so that it is sure to seem to many to be scarcely possible to employ the same term. "The importance of the good of public security..." to cite MacIntyre's full text here, "although it is a good without which none of us in our various local communities could achieve our common goods, must not be allowed to obscure the fact that the shared public goods of the modern nation-state are not the common goods of a genuine nation-wide community and, when the nation-state masquerades as the guardian of such a common good, the outcome is bound to be either ludicrous or disastrous or both (MacIntyre, 1999, 132)." Much criticism of the European Union is based upon the false premise that the Union should embody the character of a well-functioning local community. When it fails to do so, many Europeans simply assume that it is a failure as an institution. Even though the latter reproach is oversimplified and thus unjustified, it is necessary to take what is at the core of this objection to the functioning of the European Union seriously in our efforts to come to grips with the notorious 'democracy deficit'.

What has to be learned from the disappointments, frustration and anger with the European Union is that European democratic practice must be anchored locally. How is this possible. One possibility would be to create European Forum should link the concerns of local communities in which sympathy and generosity are central values to both national and international institutions, whose capability for creating frameworks for large-scale programs that can help to meet local concerns can be exploited. Naturally, that is no simple task either from the organizational or the political point of view. In short, the European Forum should be a place where ordinary people can have

input into policies relating to the larger European issues typically associated with globalization such as economics, ecology, energy, security, health etc. The local branches of the forum should create a kind of political workshop where open discussion across perspectives, which are sure to be frequently heated and frustrating, can take place that will have an impact upon both national and European issues. There is very broad agreement among the various thinkers drawn upon here – Lippmann, MacIntyre, Crick, Sen – each in his own different way emphasizes that renewed public discourse is absolutely central to realizing the demands of justice politically in our world. The idea of creating a European Forum for political debate is consonant with that insight. Our European representatives must take the initiative to create that “process of practical reconciliation of the interests of the various...aggregates or groups which compose a state” that realizes the common good and civilizes politics (Crick).

Europarlimentarians should organize and participate in these discussions adding a touch of “realism” from their parliamentary experience, explaining what is practically feasible with respect to a given problem at a given point in time. They should convey the critical spirit of popular sentiment that emerges to the European Parliament. This is all part of the complex task of representation. The danger that threatens Europe is pseudo-democratic populist demagoguery, i.e., mobilizing broad segments of the populace against big government in Brussels by cultivating popular sentiments. Populism turns elected officials away from genuine representation to a mere tribune function. Briefly, populism is political disaster in a republican state; it is nothing other than an effort to raise the tyranny of the majority to a political principle. As Bernard Crick has put the matter, “representatives must be politicians: if they all simply represent their immediate constituents and did not mediate, compromise, and occasionally think of the interests of government, they might survive but it is unlikely that the republic would.” (Crick, 2005, 50); the same is true of the European Union. It should be clear from the start that we should not expect anything like substantive consensus to emerge immediately from those laborious exploratory discussions either at a local or at some higher level. Rather, they should be a continual reminder to lawmakers of the popular parameters of policy-making – we should remember that on the Aristotelian view of politics from which the very idea of the common good emerges the basis of true politics is that political activity is pursued for the sake of the ruled, whose role is to consent to policies that are in their interest and to oppose what is not on the basis of arguments designed to convince the majority, i.e. as “loyal opposition”. Even if there is not consensus about policies, there must be consent about procedures. A European Forum is one way of realizing that goal which has been at the heart of Christian Democracy from the start (Martens, 2008, 37ff.)

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